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PROGRESS

IN

ART AND ARCHITECTURE,

WITH

PRECEDENTS FOR ORNAMENT.

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BY

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE substance of the following pages was prepared originally in the form of a consecutive series of papers, to be read before the Architectural Association of London during its subsequent sessions ; and portions have already appeared in several of the professional journals at the time of their delivery : they are now, however, for the first time presented to the public in the manner in which it was always designed that they should be united, and have been likewise most carefully revised, while many parts have been entirely re-written. The interest attached to the subjects treated of in them has, I apprehend, in nowise become diminished in the interval that has elapsed since the papers were first delivered ; nay, I venture to hope that the principles which are contended for therein have, since that time, gradually leavened both the profession and the public, urged powerfully, as they have been, by authors of whom the age may justly be proud, and whose talents Art may be thankful to have enlisted in her service, in the wake of whom I fear it seems presumption in me to launch so humble a bark ; but as it often happens that an echo is heard when the voice which gave it birth passed unnoticed, so perhaps some may be induced to listen even to my feeble remonstrance, whom prejudice has prevented from receiving the truth from another and a better quarter ; or at least I hope that as successive blows drive home a wedge into heart of oak, so

perchance my words, possessing but little power in themselves, may help to fix the truth deeper into the minds of men, and, like the chisel of the antiquary, hinder the rust of time from effacing the impression that may have been already made therein.

Agreeing, however, as I do in the main with such writers, there are points advanced by them in which I cannot entirely concur ; among which are some assertions which have been made upon the question of progress in Architecture, as to the prospects of which I consider too desponding a view has been taken ; so that the glimmering of dawn on the horizon before us is still shrouded from the eyes of many through their continued endeavours to fathom the night mist which has so long been settled around us, and they are ready in consequence to deny us the very power of escaping from the trammels of error and prejudice. Yet I think that whether we examine the Painting, the Sculpture, or the Architecture of the present day, proofs are to be found therein of at least a higher aim, with somewhat greater skill and knowledge than was the case some few years since. This advance, however, can only be considered as relative to the abject state of degradation in which they then existed, and if viewed in comparison with almost any of the mouldering relics left to us from what we are pleased to term the dark ages, our boasted civilization is immediately and totally eclipsed.

Whether, then, the movement which has been already made is to be considered “as a springing up of seed, or but a mere shaking among bones,” as questioned by Mr. Ruskin ;—whether we may hope to have ever again a living and a true Architecture, suited to our purposes and times, which shall be a medium for the expression of thought, and not a mere childish dilitanteism,—a dull prating in a bygone unknown tongue,—a cold, gaunt, galvanic revivification of the dead ;—is a matter to us of the

deepest moment, and one which demands our most careful inquiry. To me, indeed, the signs which I have named wear a more healthy aspect, even though they may not point to an immediate leavening of society in general with the principles of true taste; the cause of which deficiency is, as I hope to be able to point out, the impotence of the several branches of Art to produce any very extended influence, consequent upon their isolation and the want of sympathy and union of their individual efforts. I cannot see any reason to think that Art is yet in its dotage, since its destiny has been ever like that of some encroaching sea, that ebbs, indeed, and leaves its shore dank and drear for a time, yet gathers together the strength of its receded waves, and then with renewed force flows again over the rocks from which it had subsided, extending still further its domain over the land; for we find that it ebbed once when, fallen from its purity and degraded by the luxury it pampered, it no longer in the foreign soil of Rome left a record vigorous and earnest and true of its cravings for beauty and strivings for immortality, as it had done before in the youth of nations in the hands alike of the Assyrian, the Egyptian, and the Greek; and that it flowed again when, washed in the flood of the barbaric invasions from the mire it had contracted, it arose strengthened by the holier and far better principle of Christianity, and trustfully, silently, and patiently wrought its onward way afresh, careless of praise, intent only on its mission, soaring heavenward in its might and the singleness of its aim. Once more, however, did it ebb, leaving this its simplicity and faith, and, by looking to itself instead of from itself, became choked by pride and presumption, and sank at length numbed and nigh lifeless into a trance deep almost as death, in that it neither heeded its shortcomings nor recked of the rust that consumed it; then at the period of the RENAISSANCE—as in irony alone we can continue to call it—was the exhumed mummy of Paganism set up in its place, and to this now for three centuries deluded Europe has bowed. But the reign of this folly we

trust is nearly over, and the corpse of Classic Art, we hope, will soon be decently re-interred ; for then, and not till then, may we with some reason expect that the tide will flow again, and Art in every branch be advanced to the high position which the vantage ground of modern times over those that are bygone, in the absence of superstition and the increase of science, should enable her to attain.

JOHN P. SEDDON.

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# PROGRESS IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE,

§c.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE DUE RANK OF ART CORRESPONDING WITH THAT OF SCIENCE,  
AND THE HOPES AND MEANS OF ATTAINING THERETO.

THE whole of the past history of the world, despite the vicissitudes it has undergone, despite the groans of crushed myriads, and the blood shed crying to heaven from all ages, is but the record of that progress which is the universal destiny of man, and which so raises him above the beasts of the earth, which, with all their curious crafts and subtle instincts, remain ever as on the morning of their creation.

The course of this progress has not, however, been at all times self-evident, uniform, nor calmly prosperous ; the sky has not been ever bright above it, nor the flowers every where cheerily springing beneath, but its path has been chequered variously with light and shade ; now obscured by threatening clouds, raised by the crimes and follies of men, and which have brooded darkly over its horizon, till oft some pitiless storm has well-nigh swept back into barbarism every vestige of civilization, and many a proud nation been, as it were, blotted out from the face of the earth, and all the monuments of its prowess and its pomp buried beneath its ruins.

Yet amid the fall of successive dynasties and the wreck of whole empires and nations, the beneficent designs of Providence have overruled all events to this end ; and by blending the rude energies of the conquerors with the more polished manners of the conquered,—by nursing freedom in the camp and arts in the cities,—they have prevented the blessings of peace from settling on the lees of luxury ; they have worn away the fatal rust that would else have corroded all the more generous and the better feelings of the soul ; and they have quelled the fierce passions and ennobled the ambition of the barbarian ; and thus dispelled the mists of superstition, of ignorance and prejudice that oppose the career of civilization, and the development of intellectual, of moral and religious laws.

Progress then, the crown of the past, the hope of the future, is at once both the noblest privilege and the bounden duty of man. Every faculty that each possesses is capable of infinite improvement, and we must therefore develop the same to the utmost extent in our power. There is a moral obligation upon us to advance ; there can be no halting on the road ; nor is there any resting-place for the slothful. If we are not proceeding onward we are surely going backward ; and the first step in the path of retrogression made by any one of us is not his loss alone, but a fraud upon his fellows. Such then being the universal law to which the world and the things of the world are subject, it has been most wisely ordained, that every passing event and each external object should have a relation to that law, and a purpose to fulfil, which far transcends that momentary one for which alone it might at first seem to have been designed. For this end has God spread around us his marvellous works,—those pages of the *book of Nature* which is second only to that of his Revelation, and which is written in a language that all people may read, that the meanest capacity may understand, and which is written alike for our instruction and our discipline as for our amusement and delight.



The meanest capacity may understand the lessons thus offered to us stamped on the works of nature. The untutored savage may there read if he will the broad laws of order and right : there is a response to these mute teachings within every well-attuned mind. Every man may learn patience, diligence, love and affection, from the example of the beasts of the forest, and even from the insects which crawl upon the ground ; and he may gather thence, as well as from the inanimate things around him,—from the ocean with its restless waves, and from the hills with the waving woods which cover them,—an unfailing evidence of an infinitely higher power and intelligence than his own ; and he may thus learn to adore a creative wisdom, and to trust in one who hath so apparently cared well for him, and hence be driven to seek a fuller knowledge in the pages of Revelation. But though this be the evident design of the universe in which we dwell, how many of us are there who receive such teaching from it ? Most will not ; and in these days when monotonous rows of melancholy-looking houses are fast swallowing up the suburbs of all our larger cities and manufacturing towns, there are myriads who but rarely are able to obtain a sight of such a thing as a green meadow or forest-tree ; who can only peer through a murky medium at heaven's blue vault above them, and have no opportunity of examining aught but the works of men like themselves. To such as these therefore the book of nature is as it were a sealed work ; while there are others who pervert its meanings and mistake its teaching, not receiving from it humility, but rather food for their own pride, wresting from it arguments for false Deism. Again : it is not among the more crowded haunts of men that its higher passages are in general displayed. It is only “ they that go down into the sea in ships that see the wonders of the deep.” It is in the fury of the storm, in the solitude of the desert, or upon the lofty mountain peak, that the visions of the more solemn or awful import are vouchsafed to the few that seek them. To convey therefore to others the memory of such scenes, to

record such manifestations of glory, a faithful witness is needed,—a *translation* of this *book* into the ordinary language of life, a means of rendering it intelligible to the weak and the ignorant, and of forcing it upon the attention of the obstinate and the dull. To whomsoever then this task is committed they are bound to give a witness faithful and true; and to their peril it is if they palm upon the credulous their own sickly imaginings in place of what they have seen and heard; their own paltry compositions in lieu of the workings of nature; their own fancied improvements of her perfect works with their imbecile alterations of her unerring laws.

Art and Science are the *Translators* of nature: humbly do they both search into her mysteries, and then joyfully publish that which they have therein learnt; the latter of the principles of her mechanism, the former of her beauty and græce; to the full perception and thankful admiration of which qualities it is their office to educate the mind, that from the contemplation of the wisdom and power of creation it might be led to the due knowledge and reverence of the Creator; and thus fulfilling so high a portion in the beneficent designs of Providence for the progress of the human race in so far as they are sought with earnestness, thankfulness, and love, and not merely for their ministry to our selfish comforts, and pleasure, and luxury, do they stand *foremost* among the objects proper for intellectual pursuit.

While, however, Science, in obedience to this natural law of progress, has in modern times advanced with rapid strides, and extended world-wide its blessings, Art has made no equivalent advance; most vigorous, it would appear, in the early spring of civilization, in the infancy of nations, and when nursed in the energy of earnest thought and simple utterance, she has withered amid the pomp of luxury and the parade of show, and suffered less from the hand of violence than from gradual neglect and her

own misdirected efforts : the path not being so clearly marked out as that of Science, she appears in modern times to have forgotten that progress is expected of her, and has wandered in a retrograde course, hopeless of surpassing a fancied perfection reached long since, and blindly surrendered herself to a false exaggerated veneration for the works of antiquity, which has been destructive of all enterprise.

The just consequence of this betrayal of the commission entrusted to her has been that she has lost her due rank in the estimation of men ; nor until this be re-established can there be a hope that she will be enabled to render an account worthy of those far greater advantages we possess at the present day. Upon this point I am tempted to dwell here for an instant, having found that this position which I would claim for Art is in general absolutely denied, and that even a suggestion of her comparative equality with Science is usually ridiculed ; and such an error as this widely disseminated throughout society is, I conceive, sufficient to prevent the success of her most strenuous efforts to regain the path of progression from which she has wandered. It need not indeed excite our astonishment that those who are intent alone upon the provision for their bodily comforts, and who forget in the pursuit of the means all the objects and ends of their existence, should stigmatize Art as unprofitable ; but there are many even who do turn their attention to subjects of higher moment, who, attracted by the dazzling discoveries of Science, affect to look down from the heights to which she has attained upon her less successful competitor, as beneath serious attention, and suitable only for their amusement ; and hence it is that so far greater a share of the energies of the educated in society are directed into that channel, while this remains neglected ; so that Art exists, as it were, by tolerance, and, bereft of a wholesome patronage and judicious criticism, is obliged to pander to all the wavering fancies and fashions of the hour,

resting not to perfect one of her borrowed types, and daring not to think for herself.

Yet if it be observed how Nature makes use of those qualities of which it has been said Science and Art are the exponents, no precedent will be found in her works for this unjust preference. Whether is it their *mechanism* or their *beauty* which is rendered the more apparent, and offered the more freely to our admiration? Surely that which were the more essential to our happiness would be the oftener presented to our view; and yet we are not taken every hour behind the scenes to see the subtle methods of her construction, but *beauty* is showered on all her works: it is the melody of creation which made the morning stars to sing together, which made God to pronounce His work “*very good*” when He created the trees to be “pleasant to the sight” as well as to yield fruit for food. Now, indeed, it may swell into a grander strain, and now sink into a softer cadence, being not shown forth every where alike, lest our sense of it be blunted and our search for it retarded, but *lent* only in its fulness for a moment, yet it is ever present as the type of infinite love, as the seal of the Creator set upon His works for our admiration and delight, so that no creature lacks a sufficiency.

Inasmuch, then, as it is not necessary that the body of man be dissected before the pre-eminence of his form can be seen,—inasmuch as it is not needful to have a close acquaintance with the hidden machinery of bones, of muscles, and ligaments to perceive the grace of outline, the flush of colour or power of expression which are patent on the surface,—inasmuch as health was prior to disease, and therefore to surgery which would cure it,—so is Art the elder sister of Science. The latter may, indeed, like the insect architects of the ocean coral isle, patiently adding fact to fact gleaned by observation, build again in theory the system of the uni-

verse ; yet her work is that of reason and intellect alone, a simple process of induction, and, amid all the pride of the knowledge thus gained, and the ease of wealth it procures, there is cause for fear lest the affections become blunted, and the faith relaxed, and the heart steeled, so that men take no more notice of the glory of the heavens, save that they drop fatness on their fields, or guide their vessels through the deep, nor of the bow set in the clouds, but for its prophecy of the seasons ; but the warning voice of Art is raised to fix the most transient beam of loveliness that passes over the face of nature, and to stay for the thankful admiration of millions and tens of millions yet to be born those revelations of grandeur and beauty which stand as the epochs of a life-time, while she is able further to create beauty for herself, working with the principles she has gleaned from nature, and adding thereto the image of thought.

The recognition of the rank which I have thus claimed for Art is the first and most essential step which must be made in order to effect its progress ; for then, and not till then, will they who give their lives to its practice approach their high duties in neither a vain, nor a trifling, nor a mercenary spirit, and the public be taught truly to appreciate their labours, justly to criticise and judiciously to patronise them. I shall endeavour in the next chapter to explain how greatly the power of its different branches to make good their title to such claims depends upon their mutual combination and assistance, and how their present state of disunion tends to the degradation of each ; but as it is my present purpose to consider rather the prospects of Architecture than of Art generally, I pass now to review the individual condition of that particular branch, in order that we may ascertain the position in which we ourselves are at present, as well as the route we ought to follow, that, being no longer in danger of working wherefore or whither we know not, we may put our whole energies to the task, and then neither pause to look back nor loiter on the road.

Architecture combines the character of both Science and Art, and stands therefore in a somewhat anomalous position, since it may advance with rapidity in its former capacity, and yet remain stationary or even retrograde, and that without being observed, in the second; and thus its health—nay, its life—as an art may decay, till it sink into a mere craft of building. Then it differs from both Painting and Sculpture in being less directly imitative and more creative than they, for the materials with which it has to deal are too rugged and unyielding to allow of closely copying natural forms, and thus it becomes essentially conventional. It works rather with the principles of nature, and the type which it chooses thence must be engrafted upon and developed together with the idea of the stability of the framework of its structure, and the system of the heaping up and over-arching of its separate stones. Its means of expression also are more limited than theirs: material abstract beauty or sublimity is its scope, and that a wide, noble, and sufficient one; for the limits of its power have not yet been reached by man, nor need we fear they will be, as it is the highest presumption to suppose that we have extended to the utmost one faculty with which we are endowed,—to assert that we have become so wise we cannot be wiser.

Architecture, then, in the first instance, may err, and has erred, from its character as an art having been subordinated to that of Science: as if its convenience and fitness for the very lowest utilitarian purposes were the all and all required of it, but little thought is in general bestowed upon its power of pleasing and instructing the people, and, if at times a spirit of ostentation has induced a selfish display, it is not held in remembrance that it is a moral injustice to blot the face of the earth with buildings which are an eyesore in the sight of men. The cause of this neglect I believe in a great measure to be that Architecture is seldom embraced, like Painting and Sculpture, from an ardent love alone, but is

so notoriously coldly and calculatingly entered upon as a respectable profession, and, thus clogged with incompetency, it is kept in a respectable grade of dull mediocrity, in which it is likely to remain until undertaken with a nobler intention than simply to make it pay. It may too and has erred, from its principle of conventionality having been forgotten in the attempt after a literal imitation of the forms of nature in its details, instead of such a due ordering of their irregularity and pruning of their wild luxuriance as may render them suitable to its purpose ;—an error which is one of the earliest symptoms of its decline, and rampant in the present day. Architecture has also erred, inasmuch as association and prejudice have fettered it with the arbitrary laws of antiquarianism in its search after abstract beauty and sublimity. Such a catalogue of examples have been deduced from the works of the ancient masters, and fitted together as a puzzle by a child, into a system that their authors never dreamt of, to which it has been attempted to bind us into exact compliance, compelling us to a mere reproduction of their facts, and debarring us from venturing to the same source whence they drew, lest we should do aught for which we have not precedent, as if precedent diminished the range of invention, and riveted links to a chain confining our liberty, instead of being, as it really is, the adding of man's thought to thought, the gaining of a higher position whence the horizon of our view is extended, and fresh regions of discovery opened, the widening of the sphere of our knowledge, which knowledge is power, given to us for further use, that, having learnt how those great masters applied the types they chose from nature, we may in like manner apply other types for ourselves from the same exhaustless store.

It is, however, now generally acknowledged that we have a record of our own to leave,—a transcript of the feelings of the age to embody in our works ; that we should strive after more than a mere reproduction of those

of past ages, and ought to effect more than has yet been done. Several voices have already been raised condemning the practice of following Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Goths, as fashion might sway, denouncing the false system of copyism, impugning the all-enslaving authority of antiquity, and urging us to put aside the distorting medium of association : these have bid us to think for ourselves, and not to pilfer the thoughts of our fathers, and thus has been already rent the veil of thick darkness that overshadowed us, and the death-knell rung for the practice of three centuries. Yet the hydra Copyism dies hard ; and though Nature, thus held up as a beacon light, has flashed conviction and astonishment to many of his votaries, who before trusted to the glimmering rays reflected from a past inspiration, there are others who, panic-struck by this transference of their allegiance from the tyranny of antiquarianism to the principles of nature, have endeavoured to stigmatize the act as presumption ; yet certainly there was more of presumption in the setting up of man and his rules in their stead.

Accepting, then, Nature for our guide, as we are bound to do, seeing that we have no other source of inspiration open to us, we need further to know how we shall deduce from her works the principles we require, and in what manner we are to apply them to our conventional purposes. Here, then, is the right use of Precedent, which let the architectural student examine well, and then go and do, not the same, but *likewise*.

Towards the right comprehension of these principles much practical assistance has been rendered by Mr. Ruskin in "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," as well as in his later work "The Stones of Venice ;" and yet the brilliancy of the former becomes sadly clouded over where this question of *Progress* is treated of ; so much so that truly "The Lamp of



Obedience," the last of the series, is fearfully quenched in gloom ; for in it we are forbidden all hope of advancing our art until we can again merge the profession into a band of Freemasons as of old, and " teach our architecture at our schools from Cornwall to Northumberland, as we would teach English spelling and English grammar ;" and it is proclaimed that " until a universal system of form and workmanship be every where adopted and enforced, our architecture will languish in the dust ;"—that " the only chance for architecture rests upon the bare possibility of obtaining the consent of architects and the public to choose a style and use it universally;" and this opinion I find is supported by Mr. Ferguson in his work on " the Principles of Beauty in Architecture;" for he also tells us therein that a gradual national improvement of some style, universally chosen and practised, will alone effect progress in Art, by the same means as facts are accumulated in physical science, from which, tracing the arts in regular gradation, he concludes that the same causes influence the whole series, and discourages the idea of individual improvement, and prohibits any from practising otherwise than on a general stock design, which alone they might add to, correct, or improve.

Now the essential differences which I have been endeavouring to show, as existing between Science and Art, preclude this wholesale application of the same laws to both ; and besides, the scheme is utterly opposed to the spirit of the age, and therefore impracticable. The days of feudalism and monastic compulsion are past. Architects are no longer an order of priests, and their numbers would prevent them, even did they wish it, from thus combining in so fraternal a manner, and submitting to such a thralldom as this would necessarily be. Mr. Ruskin himself fears its impossibility, but asserts that with that he has nothing to do ; yet indeed we have something to do with its possibility, for the present is one

phase in the general development of society,—one page in the history of its progress, to which the world has not arrived by mere chance. To deny the possibility of further progress in any branch of human skill or knowledge is to assert that Providence is at fault, which is absurd : we may be sure that we shall never be placed in a position where our duty should be impossible. Selfish, and depraved, and short-sighted, nor dreaming of such things individually, we may be, yet the ways of Providence are not to be thwarted by our misdeeds ; she has other intentions in view, and will work out her own path in her own manner, and that without our violently recurring to systems of past ages to help her.

In the arguments I have referred to, it seems taken for granted that the formation of a universal style, after the model of those that have been, is the grand desideratum ; and it may be that the method suggested is the only one by which such result could be attained. But then it is not necessary that such a style should be established in order that architecture may progress. We look not that our painters should give the same features or attitudes to their figures, the same composition or tone of colouring to their pictures ; nor do we ask this monotony of our sculptors : wherefore, then, should it be demanded from us ? The day has passed when the works of a nation should be reckoned in the aggregate, and their growth described as regularly as that of a vegetable. We want neither a new nor a universal style ; it were better that we knew nothing about styles ; the very name of them is a bane and a hindrance to the architect, however useful to the antiquary. Let us leave it to posterity to classify our productions, and be sure that if we work simply, neither copying nor striving for singularity, we shall not then so belie the feelings of our age and country but that they must impress themselves upon our work, though we perhaps may see it not. We shall at least do that which

shall have an appearance of life, and which, rudely it may be, yet surely, shall pierce to the sympathies of men. Let each architect, then, shun plagiarism as a stain upon his reputation, and then all beauty is common to him ; for columnar architecture, and delicacy of moulding, and precision of symmetry, are not the inalienable property of the Greek, though his several and peculiar orders are. Lofty and graceful proportion, vigorous light and shade, fairy tracery and fretted vaulting, are not a Gothic patent ; though each cathedral, with its own crisp foliage and quaint imagery, and curious penetrations, and varied details, left to us throughout the length and the breadth of our land as a record of the labour, and zeal, and love of their builders, is, as it were, *a sign-manual* which it is forgery for us to repeat. The well, however, whence they drew is open to us, and we may do more and better than they, since they have shown us how, and we have not all that lesson to learn for ourselves.

Yet if we cannot and would not compel such a unity of practice throughout the profession, we may and must expect, if we are to look for progress, a far greater degree of consistency in that of its individual members than is usual at present ; for one thought fully carried out is sufficient for a man's life ; nay, it is a legacy he may be proud to bequeath. Else in pandering to the appetite for novelty, if no two designs of an architect are to resemble each other, there is no help for him but to continue copying the works of others, since he cannot rest to perfect one idea of his own. "The Lamp of Obedience" is a noble one, and necessary to rescue us from restless agitation for novelty, which is as injurious as the opposite extreme. All progress must be founded on what has been done before ; therefore whatever precedent a man selects, let him keep to it and improve thereon to his utmost, not suffering himself to be driven from his

post by the withering storms of criticism, which ever arise when aught that has not previous authority is attempted<sup>1</sup>.

It is upon our own individual improvement that we must depend for progress: there is but little use in seeking for new theories for the development of architecture, for the present system is sufficient for our purpose: it is reform, not revolution, we want; a higher aim and a recognition of the dignity of our art; a closer study of the forms of nature, by which the taste is refined, and a feeling for beauty obtained which will not desert us when engaged in the sterner studies of the science. And for the comprehension of the principles to be derived from nature, the exercise of *common sense*, which, unfortunately, is not so universal as its name would appear to signify; for, as Emerson declares, "nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain dealing." It is not the sense of the mob, of the multitude, of the majority, of the illiterate, of the savage or the fool; but the term is synonymous with *right sense*. It is the natural sense, unprejudiced, yet refined by education; that which, however men may deride it, or act without reference to it, they will at last, when they see it, acknowledge to be better than their own. It is the want of this which kept architecture and the criticism thereof so long in a state of degradation; for if men would only build a good wall instead of a *Gothic* wall, it must needs then be right; or if they would judge of a building by the tests they apply to other things, and not allow *the style* to cloke all manner of ugliness, there would be some hope for the proper appreciation of the art.

As then in literature it is not well to mince, and pick, and choose

<sup>1</sup> Witness the inane outcry which greeted the early attempts of the Pre-Raffaélites in painting, but which is now gradually becoming hushed.

the words, or cavil about the rounding of a sentence, lest to such minor points we sacrifice the point and pith of the argument ; and as we should rather seek to write with terseness and energy what we have to say, and look to the matter and not to the manner ; so in architecture let us not worry ourselves to be original, nor strive to be peculiar, remembering, to quote Emerson again, that “ Genius leaves to novices the gay, the fantastic and ostentatious, and itself pierces directly to the simple and the true.”

## CHAPTER II.

### THE UNITY OF ART, AND THE RELATION OF ITS SEVERAL BRANCHES.

I HAVE stated in the former chapter that one important cause of the degraded state to which Art has fallen in these days, and of the neglect to which it is subject, arises from the isolation of its several branches and the want of sympathy and union in the efforts of those who follow each respectively. It was after the revived Paganism of the cinque cento period had utterly overwhelmed the purer spirit of Christian art which had preceded it, and firmly established its baneful rule over Europe, that first, since the morning of its birth, the world saw the strange anomaly of Art rejected from all influence over the affairs of mankind. It had been from all time that kings, priests, statesmen, and people owned gladly its sway; that policy and religion disdained not by its means to promote instruction and morality; and that all that is noble and all that is fair and historical in the records of a nation had been connected with its Art; for then it was universal, and sought with whatever material was at hand to embody the creations of the mind; whether with the builded masonry of hewn stones in the chiselled block of Parian marble, or with glowing colour upon the canvas or plastered wall, it mattered not that the means should differ, so that the end accomplished was the same.

But now, forsooth, reason, which was falsely deified, needed not the

light of imagination, but dashed that friendly beacon to the ground ; the very connexion of Art with common sense and common life was severed ; the mass cared not for the matter ; so that, having lost its natural hold on their minds Art had to seek a fictitious one. No longer universal and united, the very bond between its several branches was broken, and each shrank selfishly and grudgingly into its own narrow and contracted sphere. The sculptor abandoned the architect, and the architect the painter, and each strove to monopolize his craft by enveloping it in mystery, making it appear like a species of juggling, the key to which was in the hands of the initiated alone : each hid, as it were, his lamp under a bushel, while the shades were increasing of that long night of more than three centuries which followed, through the gloom of which some stars indeed shone out brightly with their own genius' light, and yet could impart none around them.

If, then, now as we think there seems to be a gleam of the dawning, and that some hope of a recurrence to sounder principles of Art is to be traced in many of the public and private buildings being erected around us, distinct from the more ephemeral changes of fashion which previously periodically succeeded each other, and even more hopefully in the earnest efforts of some few of our painters and sculptors, evidencing an increase of power, together with a more serious and intelligent aim, and a more intense study and childlike following of nature ; and while much hope may be gathered therefrom of a gradual leavening and growth of pure taste, yet up to the present time its range has been but limited, and its progress but slow. And the cause which has cramped the one and retarded the other will, I think, be found in the want of attention to the first law which common sense would teach us—namely, *that in the unity and fellowship of the several branches of Art lies their power.*

For it is the province of Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture, to

embody the whole of the visible qualities of nature, being, as it were, the several dialects of the universal language of Art that address the visual sense, and by which man seeks to convey to his fellows the impressions he receives from the material creation around him; for which purpose, separately, they are imperfect, and individually incapable of the full rendering of the majesty of nature, since each has the power of setting forth some one or more of her qualities that lie beyond the range of the others; it is, therefore, by the union of their several efforts alone that her whole excellence can be declared. As the seasons, by their succession, complete the cycle of the year, and by their united influence bring to perfection the fruits of the earth; as the voice of all created things, weak and faint in themselves, have yet a part peculiar to themselves in the grand chorus of praise to their Maker, without which its harmony would be incomplete;—so in the Arts do their glory and their strength consist in their unity, which combines the efforts of each, and gives purpose to their power and direction to their aim. Thus Architecture embodies but the abstract principles of nature; recreating, by means of her laws of construction and geometry, she gains sublimity by vastness, symmetry, and contrast; beauty by proportion, harmony, and ornament. She builds up the polished stones of the earth into a music of visible matter, which yet is, and must remain, ever but a “frozen music,” as it has been called; out of tune with the natural melodies around, which concentrate every kind of attraction, if she avail not herself of the graces of her sister Arts. Apart from these, her means of expression are very limited, and extend not beyond the simplest emotions of the mind, addressing but few of the sympathies of men; with no more power than the lisping of a babe, or the gestures of the dumb. But that which she has to say is told from one generation to another,—is told so clearly that men may not but hear; and while she shields within her arms the more fragile works of Painting and Sculpture, their voice whose com-



pass is greater, blends with and becomes one with her own. History lends its associations, and the wild legends their awe; and when records have perished, and the voice of tradition is hushed, so long as one stone will stand upon another, time will but add a charm and bedeck the mouldering walls with the golden hues of the lichen and the moss; till, beautiful even in death, the last relic is ploughed into dust.

Then Sculpture and Painting, which, in their treatment of different aspects of Nature, descend to a closer imitation of her works—the ideal of whose search is not in principles, but in the fulness and perfection of things—whose aim is rather recombination than creation,—depend so much for space, material, and opportunity, on this their more enduring sister Art, that isolated from her and from each other, their efforts can be but cramped, small, and perishable, and become too often, as a jewel, lost for want of a setting; shelved to moulder in the dust of ages; buried in the narrow sphere of some gallery, to pamper the pride of perhaps an ignorant connoisseur, fain thus by his wealth to purchase the eclat of taste.

“Sculpture,” says Sir Charles Eastlake, “had passed the period of its perfection before its connexion with Architecture had ceased;” and much the same may be said with regard to Painting, since most of the chef-d’œuvres in that art were executed as decorations to the walls of the churches and monasteries of Italy; and if age and neglect have sadly dimmed many of their colours, had it not been for the guardianship of the structures they adorned, they would ere now have been all dispersed or destroyed.

The bond, then, between these several Fine Arts, tends to enhance and ennoble each, nay, is absolutely necessary to the perfection of either. Yet how seldom in the present day is its value duly recognised! Artists

of either class are content to grope on blindly in their own narrow course, utterly careless of the aid and sympathy of their fellows. Our buildings are thus mostly left devoid of colour, the want of which is painfully felt in the interior of St. Paul's Cathedral, and in many of our other churches ; while their carving is left, too generally, to little better than masons, or at least has not entered into the original design ; and thus cold, cheerless, and without feeling, they have no charms for the ordinary spectator ; for it requires some education of the eye, and a considerable intellectual effort, to appreciate the merits of proportion, which are all that are aimed at. Some exceptions there are happily to this rule, among which the admirable sculpture in the pediment of St. George's Hall, Liverpool, may be named, as being the design of the present architect to the building (Professor Cockerell).

Again, the Painter despises Architecture as mechanical—with too much reason at present—till driven perhaps for a back-ground to a picture he stumbles upon Archæology, and, in avoiding errors of chronology, violates the first principles of the art. And Sculpture, the line of separation between which and Architecture it were impossible to draw, has yet been rent from it, and, like Atlas raised from earth, it has lost the power it possessed. Now, for the first time, is the niche statueless, and the statue remains shelterless ; while the only combination our clumsiness can conceive, is that wretched idea borrowed from Rome, of hoisting a hero into the clouds, forsooth, to keep him out of sight and out of mind.

To renew the Gothic canopies and niche-work, so that they should appear as if built yesterday, while the figures of which they were but the covering, are altogether forgotten, is one of the worst among the countless follies of that mania for restoration which, like an epidemic, has spread over the whole face of Europe ; so that those grand monuments of

mediaeval piety, which have hitherto escaped the effects of the elements, the ravage of warfare, and the madness of revolution, are now almost every where being palsied in their age by the misguided zeal of their admirers, and stand too often flaunting in an affected freshness of youth, the very ghosts of their former selves, their spirit destroyed, their history falsified, their beauty utterly and irretrievably ruined. In other instances the architects, as they call themselves, who, in France particularly, are thus engaged in deliberately mangling all the fairest works which have been left to them, place new statues into old niches, like new pieces into old garments, which specimens of their stiff, cramped, sham mediævalism, can only make one sigh devoutly for another revolution to knock them all down again<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, though now so continually violated throughout both ancient and mediæval Art, even in their decline, do we find this principle of common sense to have been obeyed; whether we look to the stern temples of Egypt, from whose storied walls the colouring has not yet faded, and whose colossi and sphynxes—in their grand conventionalism never since surpassed—with their brows bent, and their eyes fixed so calmly as if they would scan eternity, seem as much a part of the architecture as of the sculpture; as do likewise the human-headed bulls, and the carved slabs,

<sup>1</sup> I know nothing more melancholy than the complacent self-gratulations with which the perpetrators and abettors of such barbarism blazon forth their proceedings. A correspondent, in a late number of "The Builder," after insanely preferring the Church of St. Ouen at Rouen to the Cathedral of that city, gloats over the declared intention of the French Government to restore the latter building. With a fearful reminiscence of the desecration of the façade of the Church of St. Maclou, the modern work of St. Ouen, and the *restoration* of Notre Dame, Paris, the Cathedral of Lisieux, the Church of Louviers, and many others in Normandy, I fervently pray that the noble work of Rouen Cathedral may be preserved from a similar fate. I speak not here of a judicious *reparation*, which is a far different thing.

the only remnants that can be gleaned of the palaces of Assyria ; or, if we turn to the Parthenon of Athens—which was probably the most perfect instance of the harmonious combination of the three Arts—the temple forming not only a frame for the display of the mythic history of Greece, but each group and ranked procession having its architectural as well as its phonetic part to fulfil, which could not have been effected had Ictinus and Phidias despised or been ignorant of each other's art.

And if less æsthetically refined than this chef-d'œuvre of classic Art, yet even more pregnant with feeling and thought, and, therefore, works of a higher order—and showing the architect and sculptor to be one, or at least closely united—are some of the best works of the Gothic period. Many complete and noble poems in stone are to be found over the heads of the doorways to the larger churches and cathedrals of France—a position peculiarly appropriate to them, as they here must arrest the attention of those about to enter the building, are at a suitable height, and somewhat protected from violence and the effects of the weather.

The same perfect combination of the different branches of Art are likewise to be found among the tombs of the mediæval era, in which respect they stand in strong contrast to those of the present day, which even, when themselves worthy of notice, are too exclusively of a sculptural character. This defect may be noticed in the otherwise exquisite monumental designs by Flaxman now congregated in the hall of University College, London ; in the introduction of the camp-bedstead and mattress, on which the two children by Chantrey are lying, into Lichfield Cathedral ; as in numerous other instances. Whereas those older monuments, richly decorated to a degree which their limited size renders allowable, but which might not be carried over the whole of the buildings which contain them, whose grey and sombre walls make them to glitter like gems in the

twilight, their effigies of armed knights lie as if in calm and peaceful slumber, now that their warfare is done; all blazing, like the iris, in burnished mail and enamel, shrouded in gold and vermillion, their altartomb for a couch, and canopied by a lacework of stone; beneath the arch of which there is usually, in the wall monuments of Italy, some subject of an appropriate character painted in fresco, as in that of the Bardi Chapel at St. Croce, where the figure of the warrior himself is represented in complete armour, rising to judgment at the summons of the last trumpet. Other beautiful examples there are in the churches of Verona and Venice, &c.; but few, if any, surpass in the qualities I have mentioned the tombs which surround the choir of our own Westminster Abbey.

It were, however, needless to seek further, in *Precedent the Text-book of Art*, for confirmation of that principle which we may easily, each for himself, deduce from *Nature, her Prototype*, namely, that in every object in which perfection is attempted, form, colour, and modelling of surface should be combined; and therefore that Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture, which respectively embody these qualities, should likewise be ever united. And as I believe that the recognition of this principle would be another considerable step gained towards the restoration of Art, I purpose, in the following pages, to pursue the inquiry into the manner in which Painting and Sculpture should be united to Architecture, so as to become its legitimate ornament; and shall endeavour to show how Nature is to be studied by the artist; how her principles are to be borrowed and her forms imitated, since such is the only means by which man can advance Art to the rank it ought to hold, and to the perfection it is its privilege to reach; and this, though it be the sole source of his inspiration, is one which is amply sufficient; for he may range free through all her pastures, as the bee in quest of honey, fearless of ever exhausting their riches; and with this reflection for his comfort, that even while sucking their sweet-

ness, he is not robbing her works ; that so far from stealing their charms, he but gives them others in addition, colouring them with the iris of his own imagination, and the tender hues of association, as the sun's declining beams shed a radiance over the homely meadows which is not their own. It is this interchange which Wordsworth has thus noted in "The Retrospect :"

" And Nature and her objects beautified  
These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn  
They burnished her."

And again, it is the loss of this sympathy to the objects deprived of it by the death of his friend, that Tennyson laments thus in his "In Memoriam :"—

" Unwatched the garden bough shall sway,  
The tender blossom flutter down,  
Unloved that beech will gather brown,  
This maple burn itself away ;

" Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair,  
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,  
And many a rose-carnation feed  
With summer spice the humming air ;

" Unloved, by many a sandy bar  
The brook shall babble down the plain,  
At noon or when the lesser wain  
Is twisting round the polar star ;

" Uncared for, gird the windy grove,  
And flood the haunts of hern and crake :  
Or into silver arrows break  
The sailing moon in creek and cove :"

For, indeed, what were all the beauty and magnificence of Nature, if not consecrated by the theoretic love of man, which straight lifts it into a higher order of being—translates it from inanimate to animate creation. It may be that every flower, as instinct suggests, enjoys the air it breathes. Yet it can never know the happiness derived of giving as well as receiving, nor fulfil the chief end of its being, if it command not human sympathy and love. It is this, the choice of man, which gives their charm to the carved wreaths that bind the marble capital—that twine up the arches, and clasp together the mouldings, and nestle into their hollows; while close by, perhaps, its type, the seedling fern, is unfolding its downy volute-like frond, and rustling in the breeze; or the thistle rears its purple crown with ten times the actual grace of its copy on the stone, yet vainly courting even a share of attention.

Let, then, the artist bear this in mind for his encouragement—that his time will not be lost in striving to embody some thoughts gathered from the storehouse of Nature, for the instruction and pleasure of generations to come. Let him seek diligently to learn here, where alone he can, the broad principles of his Art; and lay to heart, as the first lesson from her lips,—yea, broider it on his very garment,—that in *unity of fellowship* is his strength. Let him learn it from the music of the stars, whose circling spheres wheel ever in their orbits, the planets round suns, suns around each other, and system about system, from age to age, in harmony with this law. Or from the fury of the ocean—in the might of its waves, all varying, not two alike, as the leaves of the forest, yet all swayed by the same tide, obedient to the same currents, and driven before the same wind.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE RESPECTIVE POSITIONS OF ARCHITECTURE, PAINTING, AND SCULPTURE, AND THE REQUISITE TREATMENT OF THE LATTER FOR THE PURPOSES OF ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION.

IF we may consider as granted the premise for which I have been contending, namely, that a work of Art to be complete requires the combination of Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture, we may pass now to review the position which each of these should occupy, so that there should be no confusion or interference between them, and that neither should unduly predominate to the prejudice or injury of the others.

And, firstly, of Architecture: this is, as it were, the framework of the whole design; it should therefore appear to be predominant in all the main structural lines and features; nor is it well that any mere sculptural accessories should be suffered to break the terminal boundaries of its composition; and on this ground I believe the Gothic turret or pinnacle to be a more legitimate means of attaining picturesqueness of outline than the classic acroteria, which besides convey the unpleasant feeling before referred to, of the human figure being placed shelterless upon the most exposed situation. Wherever it is desired to put statues in such positions, common sense would suggest their being covered with a canopy which may form the pinnacle, as at the Cathedral of St. Mark's, Venice. As to the Renaissance Vases, usually stuck upon parapets, if they are not intended to catch the distilled dew of heaven for the use of the inhabitants



I can conceive no other object for them, and the sooner they are all knocked off the better. The architectural framework should be always left *comparatively* plain, so that its purpose may be at once proclaimed, and thus relief and repose is obtained for the more enriched portions. This quality may be preserved even in the most elaborate designs, such as at first sight appear to be one efflorescence of ornament, as in the transept end of Evreux Cathedral, and most of the fine contemporary flamboyant façades to the Cathedrals of France, where the main features of the buttresses, the pediments, and the openings, with their arched canopies, are perfectly distinguishable from the wall surface between them ; whereas in many of the Belgian Hôtels de Ville, e. g. that of Louvain, the whole is so equally covered with decoration of the same character, that proportion is destroyed, and the eye wanders over the frittered surface till it becomes fatigued and disgusted.

Such members as columns and piers, which have to support considerable weight, require that their apparent solidity should in no wise be interfered with ; and therefore the panels usually sunk in the face of the Renaissance pilasters, and filled with arabesques, are misplaced, and the deeply-cut mouldings of the later Gothic piers inappropriate ; but the clustering of a number of shafts to perform the office of a pier, as in the earlier Gothic churches, since they thus bear the superstructure as well as any other arrangement might do, is a legitimate and beautiful idea ; so also are the shallow channellings in the circumference of the Doric pillar, since they run in the direction of the transmitted pressure, and in no degree diminish the strength. No member that has to perform an important part in the construction ought to be disguised as a mere ornament ; nor is a miniature copy of any feature in a building to be degraded for such a purpose. Since in the former case the province of Architecture is invaded, for instance, when a crumpled mass of foliage forms a corbel

to receive the vaulting shafts of the roofs, as is sometimes done in the English decorated Gothic, and often copied in our modern churches; in the latter case it becomes the usurper, as when battlements are used to decorate the transoms of a window or the capital of the column, which is frequently to be seen in the perpendicular work of this country. On these grounds, too, we may arraign those fanciful figures—full of life, indeed, and interesting from their symbolism—which bear the columns of the porches to the Lombardesque churches in Italy, such as St. Zeno, at Verona; also the massy pendants that hang wedged-up, as it were, to the centre of the arches of the grotesque and cavernous porch at Louviers; while those from the vaulting of the south transept porch at St. Ouen, at Rouen, are still more to be condemned as not having the same visible means of support.

The proper position for Sculpture is at the junction or intersection of the main architectural features, such as the capitals, mouldings, finials, bosses, and other accessory portions, as statues in the niches or crowning important points, and bas-reliefs within pediments, panels, &c. If it be carried over large masses of surface, it would appear to usurp the place where colour might be applied to better advantage; and it will—at least, in some degree—lose its proportional effectiveness and its character as a decoration only to the Architecture. The metopes, frieze, pediment, and acroteria in the classic temple, were its field, the walls being left to the painter. Again, in the best and purest of the Gothic examples, such as the transept ends of Rouen Cathedral, it is treated in the same manner; for though the lower part of their doorways, with the angular pedestals that flank them, are covered to a considerable height with delicate bas-reliefs<sup>1</sup>, they are only the decorations to these principal features, and are

<sup>1</sup> See Frontispiece, figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4.

abundantly contrasted by space of plain surface above and around, by means of which not one of the well-studied and exquisitely-refined mouldings and other enrichments is lost in the general effect.

The double entrance to the south aisle of the nave to Bayeux Cathedral is another example of earlier date showing the same admirable proportion and arrangement, so that I believe it would be impossible either to add or remove with advantage a single ornament.

In the works of the later Gothic, however, the carving is not so judiciously confined to the principal parts, but covers often the whole of the walling, as in the apse of the Church of St. Sauveur at Caen<sup>2</sup>. In our northern climate, where it is in general impracticable to decorate these spaces with colour, it may be expedient at times to give reins to the fancy of the artist, and to trust to the sunshine to gild the projections, and to the mist to flush the recesses with purple, and by the mere force of fretted wall and carved-work, to strike awe into the minds of men. But in such cases the Sculpture will have exceeded the limits of its due subordination; and this excess can only be tolerated where it arises from fulness of thought and an ungrudging spirit, conscious that much of the work will be lost, and that it must be less effective in proportion to its quantity, and not if it consist in the mere repetition of the same details—the last resource of poverty of invention—as is too often the case with our English perpendicular buildings; or in that niggard endeavour which is the very incarnation of the spirit of modern times—namely, of producing the greatest effect with the least expenditure of thought or means.

Then the place for Colour is on the flat surfaces—the walls, the

<sup>2</sup> See Frontispiece, fig. 5.

windows, the bays of the vaulting, the pavement, &c.; whether we give them over as a blank page to the painter<sup>3</sup>, which it were well often to do, or whether we are content to cover them with quaint patterns and mottled figures. Such principal members in the construction as shafts and vaulting ribs, or those which depend upon the grace of their form as mouldings, ought to be comparatively simple, without much vivid colouring; certainly they never should be striped with lines running in a vertical direction, which destroy all their breadth, and cannot be supported by any authority in nature: lines crossing them, as those used in the decorations of St. Germain de Près at Paris, will better develop their form<sup>4</sup>—zig-zag lines running up them, as seen in the Cathedral of St. Denis, gives the uncomfortable idea of their being elastic. However, the more natural system, as in the stems of plants or trunks of trees, is to keep them of a single colour, which is best effected by the use of marbles—for instance, by the Purbeck marble shafts in the Early-English Gothic. They might, perhaps, have their colour graduated as they rise or divide into their vaulting ribs, like trees into branches; such as that exquisite painting of the mountain birch in autumn, whose slender stem gleams amid the then russet wood a line of silver grey, sprayed into ebon twigs, all showered with beads of gold.

Nor should the Colouring be allowed to interfere with the Sculpture

<sup>3</sup> As suggested to be done in the case of St. Paul's Cathedral, at a meeting during the late session of the Royal Institute of Architects.

<sup>4</sup> According to Mr. Ruskin, in his "Lamp of Beauty," "Seven Lamps of Architecture," colour *should not develop form*. Whereas Mr. Owen Jones, in his Lectures at Marlborough House, states that it is to be used for that particular purpose. I apprehend with the former that the systems are entirely independent and distinct, and never in Nature *completely* correspond; but with the latter that they usually in a great degree do mutually develop and enhance each other, and should be so used in Art.

any more than with the Architecture ; for its modelling and delicacy is seen *best*, or rather seen *only*, when left in the pure marble or stone. I know nothing that so immediately renders common the finest carving than to gild it, as has been done in the choir of Lisieux Cathedral ; or to daub it with colour, as in many of the churches at Caen, where the noble foliage of the early Gothic, and the richer Flamboyant, alike seem as if just brought from a papier-mâché shop ; while the gilded capitals within St. Mark's, Venice, though enriching the general effect are not in themselves improved by the process, as will be seen if they are compared with those on the exterior. The ground of the ornament may, however, at times, receive a tone of colour to relieve the design, if removed far from the eye. In the treatment of colour, it too often happens that attention is bestowed only upon the individual harmony of separate portions or patterns ; whereas, for general effect, the colour should be brought to a focus in one point, and the rest, as it were, toned up to it. Painted glass, by its peculiar brilliancy, or some richly-coloured screen, altar, or other feature, would supply the means of effecting this ; and it will be found that more power will be gained thus, than if equal richness or colours of equal brilliancy were carried over the whole building <sup>5</sup>.

Having, then, thus pointed out the several positions which Architecture and its sculptured and coloured decorations should respectively occupy in every perfect work of Art, I desire, in conclusion, to add a few observations upon the manner in which the forms of natural objects ought to be imitated in ornament : for I believe that it is in the design and execution of these details that our own works are particularly deficient :

<sup>5</sup> In the discussion referred to in the note to page 30, it was questioned whether, with painted glass, monochrome designs only or richer colouring should be used. Mr. G. Scott supported the latter opinion, which I believe to be the correct one.

indeed it would appear from a most general survey of the structures of the present day, that the modern idea of ornament consists in the simply cramming a certain amount of carved work upon the face of a building without reference to its meaning or propriety, to the detriment of the pocket of the employer and the profit of that of the employed ; not that it is at any time even supposed that a single person is likely to take delight in it, the only aim being almost avowedly to attract the eye of the spectator by the general richness of the effect it produces, and to excite his astonishment at the wealth which can afford so lavish a display ; so that the question is reduced to such a problem as this—given the class of building, to find the amount of decoration required : else wherefore is it that the fronts of our streets and squares are lumbered with useless plaster cornices run at half the height of the houses, to serve as a shelf for dingy sparrows, and the walls weighted with other misapplied members of construction, the greatest use of which is to find triennial work for the painter ? or why should so many of our public buildings have the keystones of their arches decorated with the decollated heads of an unfortunate family of sea-gods, till the very fishes might cry out in alarm when a palace is proposed to be erected ?—or why have our blank dreary terraces for ever in tiresome monotony gibbeted over their doors the empty cranium of some grinning idiot, while their square light-holes are left to occur at random in defiance of all feeling for symmetry and proportion ?

Such instances as these have, alas ! become so common, that they cease to excite the ridicule they deserve ; but when the attention is drawn to them, I think it must be acknowledged that the very *object and use* of ornament is very generally misunderstood. Thus the late Exhibition of the congregated handiwork of nations showed that the one borrowed idea par excellence of the nineteenth century was the bastard scroll ornament of

the French styles of the periods of Francis I., Louis XIV., or, worse still, of Louis XV. I am aware that the want which I am deploring has been already acknowledged, and that strenuous efforts are now being made in several quarters both to teach a better class of design, and to render artisans more capable of executing them; but the members of the Architectural profession at large have yet to be roused to a sense of the vital importance of such efforts to their *own* interests<sup>6</sup>, and to be induced to come forward as a body, as well as each individually, to support these endeavours, as some, though but a very small number comparatively, have already done. Architects naturally find but little time to design themselves all the details and carvings of their several works, and are obliged often to leave much of these parts to others: of what importance then it would be to them to have an intermediate class of art workmen, capable of invention, and skilled in execution, such as must have been those men whose works in the cathedrals of old now excite so great an admiration. Such a class as this is not likely to be obtained unless a proper direction be given to their efforts, nor until they be endued with an intelligent appreciation of the true end and aim of their art, and the best means of attaining the same.

With the view, therefore, of promoting somewhat this desirable object, I have collected in this work a series of examples of ornament taken from some of the finest of the mediæval buildings, having chosen them with the utmost care, in order that they should present to the reader a

<sup>6</sup> The first efforts to promote these ends were made by the Committee of the "Sub-urban Artisan Drawing and Modelling Schools," who, encouraged by the success of that which they had established in the North London district, are now endeavouring to extend their operations in other districts, and are likely to be imitated in other parts of the country by the Society of Arts.

considerable variety of types, while that each should be the most excellent of its class ; and for their further practical utility they are arranged in the chronological order of the buildings on which they occur, with some short critical remarks appended to them, showing the manner in which they illustrate the principles I have advanced.

Yet before proceeding to the consideration of these details, it may be well here at once clearly to define what is the true signification of the term *Ornament*, and briefly to review the general nature thereof ; for although the first stroke of a chisel applied to any part of a building for a purpose other than that of practical utility is intended usually to produce ornament, the result is often the reverse. To erect that which is only convenient and suitable in a utilitarian point of view is simply *Building* ; to do so with due regard to the contrasts and harmonies of proportion and symmetry is *Architecture* ; while the first rendering of any constructive feature into a fair form, for the sake of that fair form, the application of colour thereto, whether by the arrangement of the materials or by pigments, or the addition of a sculptured representation of any natural object, or only of some abstract quality of such object, is *Architectural Ornament*. Thus, to take a single instance, the cornice at the top of a building is a constructive feature and not an ornament, though its moulded profile is so ; a cornice in the middle of a building is not a constructive feature, and must therefore, to have any purpose, have been intended as an ornament ; but this it is not, it is only a useless weight hung to the wall, an ugliness and an expense ; and yet there is hardly a row of houses of any pretension in London without one.

Of ornament, however, restricted as is the term by the definition above given, there are two very different classes, namely,—



1. That which depends upon *æsthetic* qualities, and aims only at the perfection of material beauty.
2. And that which is *phonetic*—to use the term adopted by Mr. Ferguson—the object of which is to tell some tale or to express the feeling of delight that the artist has taken in the subject of his choice, and the aim of this latter is certainly far higher than that of the former.

Now there is perhaps no greater distinctive difference between the architecture of the two great epochs into which the world's history is broadly divisible than their several treatment of *Ornament*.

The art of the classic era strove after, and I believe nearly attained, perfection in the first class which I have named. Conventional and abstract throughout, it could suffer no detail to have an individual expression of its own, which might attract the eye from the contemplation of the complete temple, with the sculptured histories of the friezes and tympana, of which it formed, as it were, a frame.

But the Mediæval Architecture, through every vein of which throbbed the new life of Christianity, addressed itself not only to the sense and the intellect of man, but sought first and foremost to touch the more spiritual chords of his being, and to excite the sympathy of his soul. She cast her aim higher than the material excellencies in those matters, and, though she despised not them in themselves, was content with their imperfection, if atoned by the vigour, feeling, energy, and spirit after which she strove. She took full often, indeed, for the capitals of her columns the Corinthian type, but could no longer abide the eternal monotony of its stilted acanthus leaves, but set them drifting wildly in the summer winds, and

pressing forward into the broad sunlight and wreathing themselves into graceful festoons, like their prototypes in the fields; yet amid all this freedom and luxuriance, in all the better class of works, there is a sufficient conventionalism retained throughout to assert their character as architectural ornament, and never, like many modern attempts, would they be mistaken, except for the want of their colouring, for the original plants from which they are imitated. I speak not here of Sculpture, which is of course phonetic in both cases, differing only in that the Christian art expresses the nobler qualities of the mind. If, then, the classic details are not to be arraigned for the want of that apparent life, which might have interfered with the strict subordination which their architecture required, so likewise may we plead for those of the mediæval works an exemption from the same correct symmetry and orderly arrangement which pervade the endless rows of honeysuckle and lotus leaves, of eggs and darts which encircle the temples of Greece, if in the same space the artists of these have crowded into them ten times the amount of thought and imagination, and thus enshrined in stone hedges full of the most lovely flowers and foliage.

It is because I apprehend that the works executed during this second great era in the development of Art are the more calculated to infuse into our ornamental artists and workmen those qualities in which they are deficient—namely, life and vigorous feeling,—and because I think that the complete conventionalism which characterizes the details of classic architecture is both less difficult and less desirable to attain than that right degree of abstraction in the imitation of natural objects which is found in the best mediæval ornament, that I have confined my selection of examples of the latter; and as in these the Scylla and Charybdis of either class of ornament I have mentioned are avoided, the study of them may prove the means not only of correcting that over-conventionalism which is discovered

in the almost universal adoption of the rank bastard renaissance scroll-work and much libelled acanthus foliage, but also may prevent the further misdirection of the taste of the multitude by the display in our exhibitions of those absurdly literal copies of various animal and vegetable forms, which are but specimens of useless ingenuity and wasted labour, fitted to excite pity and derision.

In the first (*æsthetic*) class of Ornament the following are the principal qualities requiring notice :—

1. The choice of the natural Type.
2. The degree of Abstraction with which it should be rendered.
3. Its Adaption to the Material in which it is to be executed.
4. Proportion, Symmetry, Contrast, and Gradation.

1. *The choice of the natural Type.*—Nature being, as before stated, the sole source of inspiration open to the artist, it follows thence that every idea for ornament must be derived from some one or other of her work. In fulfilling the remaining requirements named above, the form or class of forms selected necessarily becomes more or less conventionalized ; indeed, often so much so, that the original type is hardly recognisable in the ornament to which it has given birth. This result has caused some persons to deny the necessity for any natural type, and to assert the independent originality of the human mind. Mr. Garbett, in his excellent treatise upon “The Principles of Design in Architecture,” without going so far as this, yet seems to consider that ornament might be compiled, as it were, simply by attention to the laws of contrast and variety. But those very laws are themselves but laws of nature, and are better observed and more easily carried out by a childlike study and following of her forms ; and their application is, as I apprehend, but one of the requisite

processes subsequent to the selection of the type. Were ornament the independent creation of man's genius, there would be a greater variety therein than is to be found; for that of all existing styles represents only the characteristics of some species in either the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdoms. In Greek ornament, which is perhaps the most conventional, the very terms of "honeysuckle," "egg and dart," &c., by which they are popularly called, show that they resemble known natural objects, though it may well be doubted whether those thus named were the precise ones from which those details were originated. The most monstrous chimera of the Renaissance with floridly vegetative tail, and jar from pottery unknown, with issuing nondescript tree, at whose dangling fruit of dolphins and lyres, helmets and shields, the said dragon complacently looks, not without interest, is no fresh creature of the imagination, but only a composition of the fancy from elements already in existence, though distant widely, as they should have remained. We demand, then, under this present head, that ornament do not transgress any of the principles of nature as shown forth in the class rather than the individual specimen imitated: that as the head of a beast is to be placed only upon its shoulders, so neither is a plant, however abstractedly treated, to be placed root uppermost, nor the stalks and fibres shown upon the wrong side of the leaves,—the character of outline, the method of division into leaflets, the flow and elasticity in the structure of foliage, should be carefully followed, although it is not in all cases necessary or even desirable to imitate the minor peculiarities of individual specimens. It were well also that thorns be not made to bear grapes, nor thistles supplied with a crop of figs; and that each tree be allowed to have its own leaves, flower, and fruit, as being preferable to either masks, fiddles, or boots. Nor in repressing such conceits is invention unduly trammelled; for the types which have been already made use of are but few in comparison with the store yet untouched, since every meadow, hedge-row, and garden, teem

with beautiful forms, inviting the choice of the artist, and requiring only an intelligent adaptation to the purposes of ornament.

2. *The degree of Abstraction with which the natural Type is to be rendered.*—Architecture being the development of *principles* in nature, as stability, proportion, symmetry, &c., it is required of ornament, to be consistent therewith, that it should likewise embody *principles*, as lightness, elegance, growth, &c., and appear to belong to, and not to be independent of, the structure. Thus it is requisite that the leaves of the capital of a column should appear to be growing therefrom, and that upwards only, and rooted firmly at the necking, not as if they were simply stuck to it or temporarily tied around it; and, further, the type of foliage they imitate must not be copied too closely, but with a considerable degree of abstraction; for as the column itself may be said to represent the tree-trunk in its general form and character of a support, while all the surface detail of the bark is omitted or merely suggested by its channelling, if the texture of the foliage be perfectly imitated, it cannot appear to be connected with the column. It is therefore essential to the nature of ornament that the copying of its type be not literal; and the very first thing which the ornamental artist of the present day has to learn, is when he should stay his hand, and to know when he has done enough; for his work is not to be complete in itself, but only when viewed in connexion with the whole of which it forms a part; his province in design is to seize such salient points only of the natural type he may have selected, without carrying his imitation so far as to destroy the idea of the material in which it is represented, or detracting from the breadth of light and shade which its character requires.

The degree of abstraction requisite in ornament varies according to its purpose and position: thus, it should be greater where it has to sup-

port any weight, or has any other visible architectural purpose to perform ; and also where it is distant from the eye the execution should be more simple and bold than when it is to be viewed from a nearer point. It may be less where it is simply wall-decoration, and enclosed in a panel or framework, as it is then sculpture rather than ornament, and the imitation may be carried to a much greater extent. But even in such cases it is well to observe the distinction noted by Sir C. Eastlake, that the noblest objects should receive the highest degree of execution, and approach the nearest in their resemblance to nature ; and that minor details, in which perfect imitation is more easily realized, should never be allowed to interfere with, or rebuke, as it were, the inferiority in the more important parts. In this respect the conventionalism of the Greek temple is deserving of study, since by the imperfect suggestion of vegetable life in the architectural mouldings, enhances the more elaborate imitation of the sculptured pediments and friezes.

3. *The adaptation of Ornament to the Material in which it is executed.*

—It would seem almost unnecessary to dwell upon a point so obviously demanded by common sense, were it not continually lost sight of in the present day. Thus forms suited only for stone-work are universally copied in cement ; whereas that material, now degraded by its service to sham, might be legitimately decorated, as it was in the timber-constructed houses of old. Wrought iron is copied in the cast metal, which is also ingeniously painted like stone, while decorations in colour are made by means of shadow and perspective to imitate the projection of sculpture. It should be borne in mind that each different material requires a class of decoration peculiar to itself, but which is misplaced when applied to any other : this is ever that which is the simplest and least affected, it being far more difficult, for instance, to carve stone into the semblance of stamped leather work, such as are the wreaths of flowers and fruit of

Grinley Gibbons and his followers, than it would have been to have preserved the breadth and massiveness more suitable to stone; but the cunning and jugglery of the former are more apt to attract the gaping vulgar, and therefore are practised by those who pander to their curious appetite.

*Proportion, Symmetry, Contrast, and Gradation*, are principal among the qualities by which the excellence of Nature is produced; and the same is likewise the case with that both of Architecture and its Ornament. *Proportion* is requisite to ensure clearness, perspicuity, and unity; it is also one of the most essential elements of Beauty, inexorably exacting of the utmost corresponding harmony in every member; the slightest alteration of circumstances requires the whole scale to be modified. This faculty of self-adjustment to every change precludes the possibility of gathering any special rules for our direction in it. The sense of it must be innate, though it may be quickened by an observance of nature, and particularly by a habit of careful drawing from the objects she presents. All attempts to reduce to practical rules this subtle and exquisite quality are useless; and the impossibility of so doing caused Burke to fall into the extraordinary error of believing that it had nothing to do with beauty. It may be noted, however, that certain ratios are more general, and therefore better than others; that it is desirable always for some one portion to predominate over the rest, and yet that this difference be not so great but that they may still bear a due relation to that which thus forms, as it were, their key-note; and that the want of proportion, namely, the equality of longitudinal or vertical component parts, breeds ever sheer ugliness, since no bond of union can then exist between them. *Symmetry*, the opposition of halves, the reverse of proportion, as being the correspondence of equal lateral divisions, is an essential element in the beauty of any whole; nor can there be unity without it. Its presence is not, however, absolutely

necessary in ornament, which, as before said, is not complete in itself. Yet its value in such details is great, and in none more so than in those wildly flowing foliated capitals of Byzantine and Flamboyant French workmanship, as shown in Plates III. and VII.; for without the orderly springing of the leaves from their common necking in the former, the power of the wind, which has since drifted them, were unfelt; and if there lacked the consent of the thorny thistle spines of the Evreux finial to the leaving of those stars of black shadow between them, their rolling were but disorder, their freedom but license. *Contrast* of angular and curved forms, of sparkling light and deep shadow, are the source of the energy of the Northern Gothic detail; while soft *Gradation* of outline and surface, of intense sunlight into the quiet depths of the dark recess, secures the breadth which gives the charm to the ornament of the buildings in the South.

Of the second class of ornament (*phonetic*) there is little to be taught by rule. The ulterior end of all Art is but to supply a language for the expression of thought; and if the thought we would convey therein to our fellow-men be worthy of expression, and this were better attained by the direct violation of any or all of the laws laid down above, willingly is absolution to be granted to genius. Not only, then, are the works of nature fit models for our imitation, but the handiworks of man—otherwise rightly excluded by Mr. Ruskin from his category of ornament in “The Stones of Venice”—may be used for the same purpose: they become then medals of history, as are the sacred candlesticks and vessels from the spoils of Jerusalem represented on the arch of Titus; and so may be handed down from generation to generation, with a reality incapable of realization by other means, the costumes, weapons, implements and utensils of every nation and each successive age. It is, however, to genius alone that such liberty is allowed, and that simply in the con-



fidence that it will not be abused ; for it is certain that by the neglect of these given laws beauty is sacrificed. Such sacrifice may indeed be made at times when compensated by majesty of thought ; but only when to its strength fair beauty is married, may the fulness of Nature be accomplished in Art.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PRECEDENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENT.

THE selection of the examples in this series has been rigidly confined to those sources which embody best the above advanced principles, and which have been the least copiously illustrated ; as to have included specimens of the ornament of each style in its development, various as the countries in which it flourished, would have far exceeded the scope of this work. It is desirable, however, for the right understanding of the whole interest with which these chosen precedents are fraught, that the position they severally hold with reference to the history of Architecture should be clearly set forth : they are, indeed, but some few and isolated links taken at random from its connected chain, but the succession of the styles to which they belong will be seen by the following table :

<i>Classic Art</i>			
wrecked with the Roman Empire, fused in the crucible of the nomad nations of the earth, sprang up, Phoenix like, thus threefold :			
<i>Christian Roman.</i>	<i>Byzantine.</i>	<i>Arabian.</i>	
<i>Early Italian Lombard.</i>			
<i>German Romanesque.—Norman.—Late Italian Lombard.</i>			
<i>Gothic.</i>			
<i>French.</i>	<i>English.</i>	<i>German.</i>	<i>Italian.</i>
Early Gothic.	Early Gothic.	Early Gothic.	Complete Gothic (Tuscan, Venetian, &c.).
Complete do.	Decorated.	Complete do.	
Flamboyant.	Perpendicular.	Flamboyant.	Late do.
The Renaissance (of Chaos ?).			

It was so, then, that the first seeds of Art, which, surviving the wreck of the Roman empire, having slumbered dormant amid the convulsions which then shook the whole of Europe, sprang up as soon as the chilling blasts of that dreary winter season had ceased, and betrayed by their weakly growth that the stock whence they came had been exhausted of all its vigour by the corrupting atmosphere of degraded luxury to which, torn from its native soil of Greece, it had been so long exposed. For if the early Christians of Rome, when constrained no longer to limit their efforts to the narrow space of their catacombs, reared in imitation of the Pagan basilicæ some temples not devoid of a certain dignity and simple grandeur, they knew not how to decorate the same. The “Opus Alexandrinum,” the marble mosaic of their pavements, and the “Opus Græcænicum,” the mosaic of glass which adorned their walls (referred to by Mr. Digby Wyatt), being, as their names import, the introduction of artists from Byzantium, they spoiled the monuments of antiquity of their columns, and fitted them with capitals and bases gathered at random, regardless of the nondescript jumble thus produced. It is evident, therefore, that this *Christian Roman Art*, feebly existent, needed some more vigorous spirit to be grafted thereon, and that it possessed not the means of its own regeneration. This was presently effected by the infusion of the rude energy of the Lombard nation, who, having conquered the fair lands of Italy, set themselves in right earnest to adapt for their own use the civilization of the inhabitants; but meanwhile another branch of the original stream of Roman Art had, in consequence of the seasonable translation of the seat of empire to Byzantium, been moulded under the influence of the Greeks into a new form—the *Byzantine*, which may awhile arrest our attention, as much of interest and practical utility may be gleaned therefrom.

The intrinsic merit of this Byzantine art, too often overlooked or

undervalued, has been ably vindicated by Lord Lindsay, who has pointed out the extent to which the Lombard and subsequent styles were modified by it. Its character is essentially reposeful and contemplative, as seen in the dome and general plan which it bequeathed to sacred Architecture, and in the freedom of its details from the grotesque imagery and monstrosities of the Lombard sculpture, and in the perfection to which it brought the types of ornament which it borrowed from the classic works, or which itself had derived from those of Nature. St. Vitale at Ravenna, St. Cyriaco at Ancona, St. Fosca at Torcello, and St. Mark's at Venice, are the principal buildings of this class in Italy; to the last, however, as being by far the most important, I here confine myself. The strange differences in the opinions which have been expressed concerning this building, particularly with reference to its façade is a matter of curious interest; but, as it is a question apart from that under consideration, I pass at once to notice its sculptural ornaments, the transcendent excellence of which I think most will be ready to acknowledge. This excellence consists in the admirable manner in which every detail fulfils its constructive purpose, in the variety, simplicity, and beauty of the several types employed; in the manner in which natural objects have been studied and applied by the artists; and last, but not least, in the mode of their execution. Among the hundreds of its capitals few are closely similar; for although many have been derived from the Corinthian, in each a different feature thereof has been seized as a means of obtaining character. In one seen from a distance the stems of the leaves throughout are marked by drill-holes only, producing a most sparkling effect; in another the acanthus' eyes are arranged into quaint triangles of shadow; or, again, the leaves have their points brought to meet each other in a series of serrated ridges (Plate IV., fig. 4); or they lie folded gracefully around a convex capital, like the packing of a bud in spring (Plate IV., fig. 5). The variety is endless; perhaps most purpose is shown in the group of shafts noticed by Mr. Ruskin,

which are set in the recess of the central doorway of the western façade, all the leaves of which are, as it were, blown inwards by a sudden blast of wind (Plate III., fig. 3). The effect of these is very striking and beautiful; others, which are exceedingly lovely, have a curious basket-work surrounding the lower part of the capital, and cut clear from the bell behind, on which, supporting the angle of the abacus, pigeons are perched. In the several examples which I thus mentioned, and perhaps in the greater number found upon the Church, the character of the foliage is somewhat conventional, although it is throughout treated with the natural flow and freedom of vegetation, contrasting most favourably with the rigid stiffness of the ancient types which have been imitated; yet in some instances, as in one most exquisite block capital in the recess of the southernmost arch of the western front (Plate IV., fig. 1) actual foliage has been represented with the utmost faithfulness and elaboration consistent with its character as architectural ornament; here it is the vine with its fruit which has been made use of, sculptured with but little relief. Altogether these details of St. Mark's are such that they might be studied with the greatest advantage by artists of the present day, as the qualities in which they excel are precisely those in which we ourselves are deficient; indeed, I think that the most exquisite piece of foliage ornament which I have ever seen is the band of flowing arabesque encircling the large arch of central doorway, which has at intervals curious hollow balls or flowers set in the luxuriant leafage (Plate I., figs. 1 and 2), upon some of which also birds are introduced, pecking at the fruit.

But although this Byzantine art was attaining to so high a degree of perfection in these few places, whither it had been introduced from the East, it was prevented by the division of the empire consequent upon the Iconoclastic decree of the Emperor Leo III. from extending itself further in the West; for in Italy, which was henceforth declared independent of

Byzantium by the Pope Gregory II., another style, in most particulars in strong contrast to this, though to a certain extent modified by it, was elsewhere expanding itself under the rule of the Lombards, and which was destined to become the parent of the future styles of the Mediæval ages.

With all the energy characterizing a youthful civilization, this war-like nation revived the waning art of Rome, and added thereto some elements gleaned from the Eastern style, particularly the feature of the central dome. But their sculptured decorations were completely original and full of intense life and freedom, though, as was natural, rudely executed. The importance of this style in the history of Art claims for it a passing notice, more than which I am unable to devote to it, since its greatest interest is antiquarian, and the practical utility of its ornament to us somewhat questionable; for the principal merit of its details lies in their vigour and imagination, which are qualities not to be communicated by teaching, nor imbibed by the copyist. The Lombard architecture may be divided into that of its earlier and later periods; the former being the more original and simple, yet presenting the greater fancy and unbridled daring in its sculptures, and revelling in the most grotesque and humorous imagery and symbolism<sup>1</sup>; the latter being far more ornate and refined in its character. It was the former only which extended its influence beyond its own locality; nor did even this display, elsewhere than in Italy, and perhaps some portions of France, the class of sculptured ornament which I have described. The principal buildings in Lombardy of this period are those of St. Michele at Padua, St. Michele at Pavia, St. Zeno at Verona,

<sup>1</sup> "They are rude, most rude: I plead only that they are life-like, and speak with a tongue which those who love the Runic Rhyme, and the traditions of the North, and feel kindred blood warm in their veins, will understand and give ear to."—*Lord Lindsay*.

and San Ambrogio at Milan. Northward of the Alps this style achieved some of its noblest works in Germany, where it studded the banks of the Rhine and the Teutonic capital of Cologne with those stupendous erections which have defied all the storms of war that have swept in such quick succession over the devoted cities they adorn. Chief among these are the cathedrals of Spire, Mentz, and Worms, with the churches of the Apostles, St. Martin, St. Gereon, and others at Cologne, all of which are of a plain character, with but little sculptured ornament, their decorations consisting almost solely of archlet cornices and narrow pilasters, which divide their broad wall surface into panels, often most exquisitely proportioned, and never injuring the general harmony of effect. In some of the buildings, however, which were erected when the style was somewhat further advanced, the details are more elaborate. Thus, in the small church at Swartz Rheindorff, on the banks of the Rhine, nearly opposite to Bonn, there are some very beautiful capitals to the columns which support the curious external arcade surrounding the upper church; they are principally composed of interlacing bands, but some have birds at their several angles. The decorations of the German Romanesque conform more closely to those of the same style in Italy, such as may be seen upon the church of St. Ambrogio at Milan, rather than to those used in the English Norman, which are generally of a coarser description. Thus, the zigzag mouldings so prevalent in the latter style is rare in Germany. It occurs, however, on portions of the cathedral at Worms.

In some of the southern and western provinces of France likewise I believe there is a development of Romanesque architecture very similar to that of Italy. To this class belongs the greater portion of the Church of St. Sauveur at Dinan, in Brittany. The lower part of the western façade, which retains, though in a mutilated state, its original character, has three semicircular deeply recessed and richly moulded arches supported by

shafted jambs, some of the columns to which are twisted, and rest on the figures of animals, while many of the capitals and corbels are sculptured into grotesque figures full of life and energy. The emblematical animals of the four Evangelists project in high-relief above the arcade, and the arch mouldings terminate in heads above the abaci of the jambs, as at Mentz Cathedral and other German buildings; and these are evidently features derived directly from Italian works.

The Romanesque development of Normandy, known to us by the term Norman, and which passed thence into England, is very distinct in character from these described. Thus the abbey of St. Etienne and Notre Dame, at Caen, built by William the Conqueror and his Queen Matilda, presenting the simple and majestic proportions of the German cathedrals, differ from them greatly in plan, and their decorations are more numerous, yet often coarse, as is the huge and ugly fret which disfigures the clerestory of both those churches. In England the style became still richer, and the elaborate doorways like that to Rochester Cathedral are almost confined to this country. It were needless to describe their details, which are so well known; and as I apprehend their effect depends on quantity and not quality, it would not materially further my present object. There is, however, a class of ornament deserving remark, which is frequent in almost all the developments of the Romanesque style, evidently deduced from the Byzantine, and discontinued when the Gothic architecture prevailed in Europe, namely, the sculpture in very low-relief which decorates without disguising or altering the form or outline of the several constructive features: it is found usually and most characteristically upon the capitals of the columns, as in St. Vitale, at Ravenna, St. Ambrogio, Milan, &c. It is usually in imitation of basket-work, interlacing bands, or a species of conventional foliage. It has a beautiful and delicate effect, while it is easy of execution, and might be introduced oftener than it is



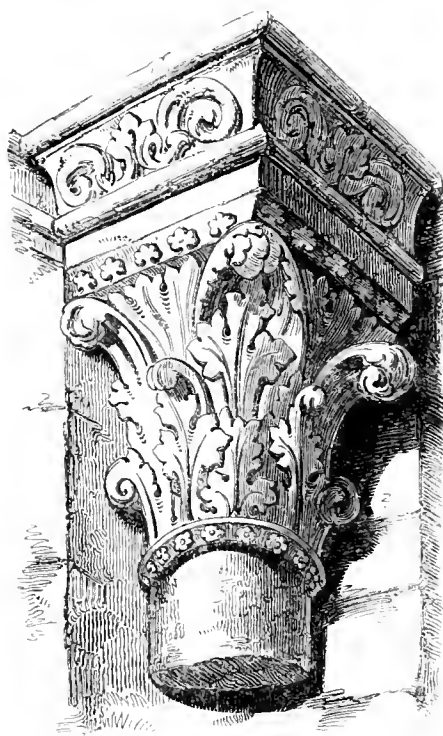
into modern work with advantage, and in place of the more ambitiously salient, but too generally stiff and clumsy imitations of Gothic foliage ; and if natural leaves were orderly arranged in this manner around the curved surfaces, particularly of the interior of a building, and either projecting in bas-relief or slightly incised, a pleasing and novel method of decoration might be thence developed. The leaves would require to be treated with considerable abstraction, and, when intended to be viewed from a distance, hardly more than the outline should be shown, but that with great delicacy and care ; but in such cases where they would be nearer to the level of the eye the representation might be carried much further. It is the delicacy of this bas-relief sculpture which forms the redeeming feature of the monuments of the cinquecento in Italy, and the period of Francis I. in France, and which, as I have mentioned, are so frequently imitated on the productions of almost all modern nations ; and if for their nonsense combinations were substituted some really careful studies of the exquisite forms of natural objects, treated in the manner I have pointed out, they might have some claim for our admiration.

Having followed the development of the early Lombard architecture in the northern countries of Europe, it is necessary to return for an instant to that of its second period in Italy, which was of a richer description, and less rude and grotesque in its sculpture than the former, and which exercised but little influence beyond the Alps, where the Gothic style was then struggling into an independent existence. Its archivolt and cornice mouldings, with circular profiles, as at St. Michele, Lucca, beneath which the ornament is incised, are very exquisite. These might be less appropriate in a country which lacks the brilliant sun of Italy to give them their due effect. But the perforated decorations of the abaci and other parts might, I imagine, be even more suitable to works in this climate, since a sufficient depth of incision would secure shadow enough

to mark strongly their outline; and it is no slight recommendation for such ornaments, that one may trust even an ordinary workman to execute them from careful drawings, with some confidence that they are not likely to be utterly marred by blunt and feelingless cutting, as is the case with all work in projection from the surface.

Upon the debated origin of the Gothic style I care not to dwell, nor yet to trace with painful accuracy the divisions into which antiquarians have somewhat arbitrarily portioned it; and although in the above table I have noted those usually recognized, I would not that the wondrous unity which to my mind forms its principal element should be disturbed. Suffice it here that its growth was gradual; it was ever in a state of transition, and in curious correspondence with its own degree of advancement is its chosen type of ornament; for, while battling still with the lingering semicircular arch, and throughout its early stage, the swathed bud and opening frond appear the favourite models; afterward the perfect foliage of the vine, the oak, the hawthorn, the maple, &c., take their place; and in its declining age the jagged thistle, flowing wildly, and often bent backward in lassitude, is the type used principally in the Flamboyant. In Plate V. I have placed together a number of examples of the early German Gothic ornament. Figs. 8, 9, 10, and 11, indeed, belong to the transitional period from the Romanesque: the porch to Maestricht Cathedral, from which the latter are taken, is a most interesting work of that class. Its arches are semicircular, but the foliage decorations to the mouldings of its deeply splayed jambs are almost identical, except in delicacy of execution, with those which afterwards were prevalent in the exquisite early Gothic of Normandy. Apparently, therefore, this character of detail was soon developed in Germany, and attained great excellence there; the capitals from Bacharach shown in the Plate, are very beautiful. Gothic architecture, however, did not long retain this character in that country,

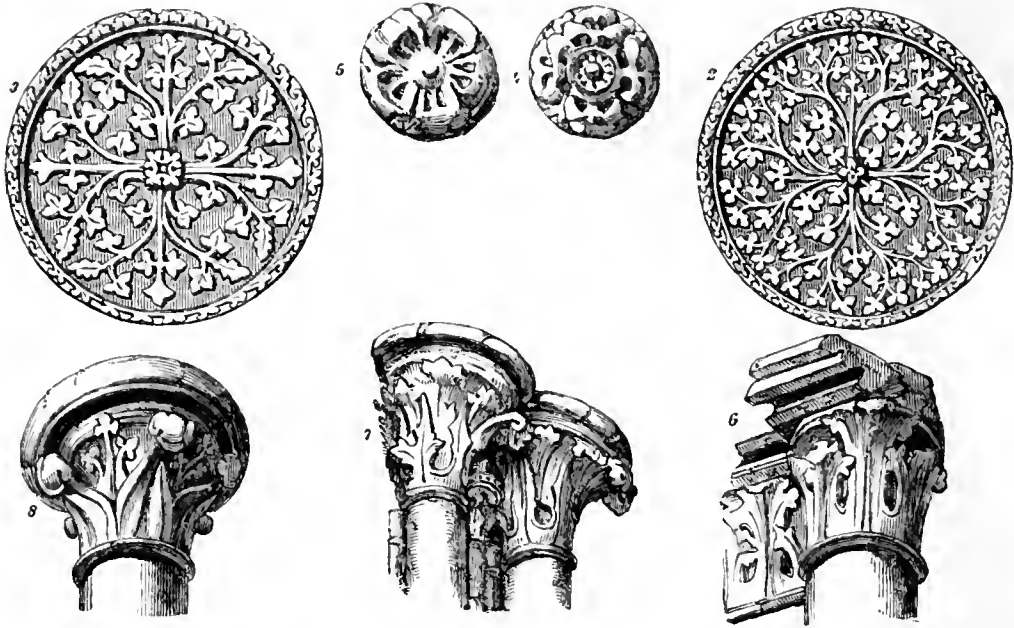
but degenerated, as I cannot but think, into the wiry cast-iron like style, devoid of all breadth, seen in the cathedrals of Strasburg, Friburg, and Cologne, the churches at Oberwesel and Oppenheim, on the Rhine, and the ruins of St. Werner's Chapel, at Bacharach, on not one of which have I seen a single detail that I cared to sketch. Their principal merit consists in their lofty proportions, and slender mullioned choir windows. Both the French and English Gothic structures are to my mind far finer than these; but the former excel in their sculptured details. The examples, however, given in the Plates are taken entirely from the cathedrals and churches in Normandy which combine the character of both. The



Capital from Rouen Cathedral.

annexed woodcut is from the southern doorway to west front of Rouen Cathedral, the mouldings of which are of a remarkably early and massive character, probably not much later than the porch at Maestricht.

The figs. 1, 2, and 3, Plate VI., and figs. 1, 2, and 3, Plate VII., are of the more developed early Gothic, as also are these details, Nos. 2 to 8, from the Cathedral of Coutances.



Nos. 2 and 3, Spandrel disks from the triforium, Coutances Cathedral.

„ 4 and 5, Bosses from south porch to nave aisle, ditto.

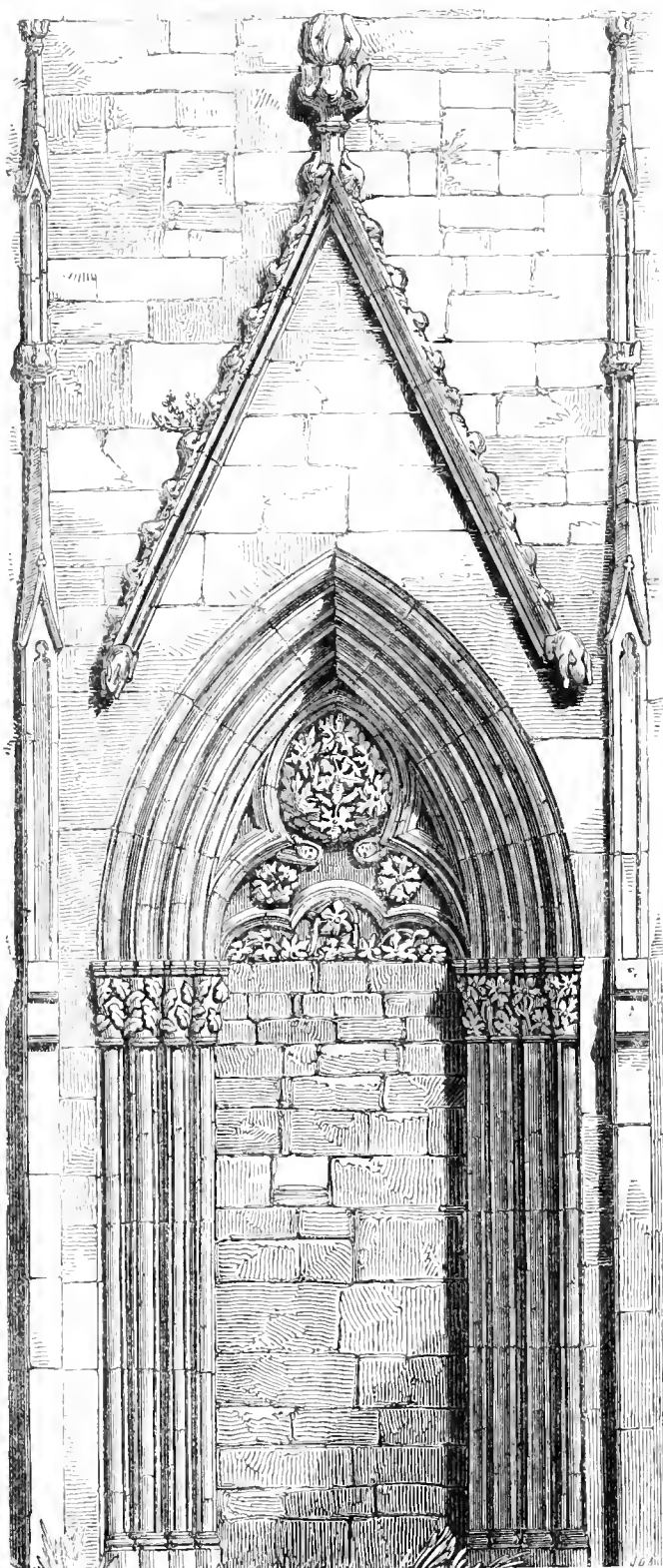
„ 6 and 8, Capitals from the interior, ditto.

„ 7, Capitals from north porch to nave aisle, ditto.

These several examples the student may compare with the foliage ornament in Lincoln and Salisbury Cathedrals, which are of much the same date, and I think he will find them to be less conventional and more varied and delicate in their execution. There are, however, at Llandaff Cathedral, in Glamorganshire, some finely swathed capitals of somewhat similar character to those in Normandy. Generally the English Early Gothic detail tells well from a distance, but is rather coarse for nearer work. Plate VI., fig. 4, is the head of a beautiful doorway in the south

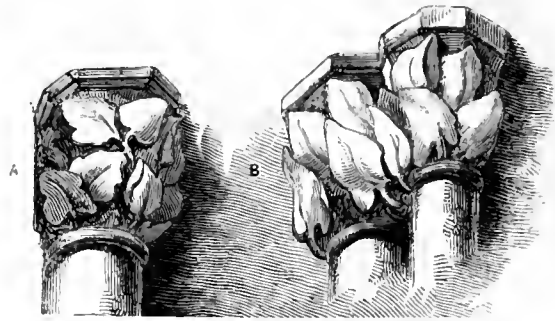
side to the choir of the church at Tour en Bessin, near Bayeux, now disused and blocked up: it is of rather more advanced Gothic, and the treatment is most perfect, carrying out exactly the principles I have advanced; the natural type is easily discernible, rendered architectural by the symmetry of its arrangement, sufficiently abstract, yet delicate in its execution. In the English decorated Gothic the ornament generally errs by its too close imitation of Nature, as in the earlier lancet style it had been too conventional. This doorway is here shown entire.

The spandrils shown in Plate



Door to Church Choir, Tour en Bessin, Normandy.

VIII., figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4, are from the north transept of Rouen Cathedral, which is one of the noblest specimens of the complete Gothic. The capitals A and B are from the Cathedral of Lisieux.



Then followed the period of the decline of this style, glorious still in many respects. If in England we may boast of noble structures thereof, with both towers and vaultings, which, despite many faults, are unrivalled, and in Germany and Belgium we may find grand works whose picturesqueness and daring atone for their want of purity and completeness,—in the Flamboyant of France alone can the detail arrest our attention. In Plate VII., fig. 4, as well as in the annexed woodcut, is shown some of the magnificent ornament for which, as before mentioned, the thistle has formed the type; and in Plate VIII., fig. 5, is given the head of one of the lofty lancet apse windows from the church of St. Sauveur, at Caen; and in Plate IX. the staircase recess in the wall of the same church, in both of which there is much that is worthy of attention, particularly the rich fringe of cusps which decorate their arches.



Crocket from St. Sauveur, Caen.

In Plates X. XI. and XII. I have put together sundry details from buildings in Italy, executed with more or less Gothic influence, but in the manner peculiar to the south, their treatment being bossy in character, in order to gain great breadth of light and shade. Not being so intimately

acquainted with the Italian as with the Northern work, I venture not to express a decided opinion thereon, but I am inclined to think the Domestic Gothic Architecture of Italy is unrivalled for its purpose, and that its detail, e.g. of the Doge's Palace, is some of the finest in the world; but that the ecclesiastical architecture, although likewise possessing exquisite parts and ornament, is, as a style, to be ranked below its prototype beyond the Alps.

The life which characterized and ennobled the luxuriant detail of the late Gothic did not continue to prevail throughout the whole period of its decline; for the decay is visible sooner in the ornament than in the architecture itself. Thus in the finely designed central portal to the western façade of the Cathedral at Rouen, by close examination, a growing clumsiness may be detected, and heavier and more rounded forms may be seen to take the place of the former crisp and sharply executed thistle-like foliage. In the church at Louviers, in Normandy, this degraded character is still further discernible, so much so that the modern restored portions do not seem far inferior to the original work, which can never be the case with the earlier and superior class; but the difference between these Flamboyant details may be descried at a glance by the most superficial observer in the decoration of the two apses of the church of St. Sauveur at Caen, which picturesquely abut upon the main street; they are similar in design, having the lancet-arched windows, which in the earlier apse are fringed with beautiful foliated cusped tracery (see Frontispiece); but in the later one the detail appears to have been already Italianized, and has become exceedingly coarse and lumpy in comparison with the other; yet the inanities which disfigure the eastern end of the church of St. Pierre, overhanging the river bank in the same city, both within and without the choir, are, if possible, of a worse description, and not much better generally is the ornament upon the Gothic buildings of Belgium, or upon the cathedral at Milan and the contemporary structures in Italy.

Here, then, may be fitly concluded this present series of Precedents, as it is not my intention to pursue further the chaotic jumble of “monkey styles” which followed the decay of Gothic Architecture, and the inundation of Europe by the torrent of the Renaissance ; during which period, indeed, much exquisite workmanship was wasted in nonsense carvings upon such works as the tomb of the Cardinal D’Amboise in the Lady Chapel of Rouen Cathedral, and upon the vaunted mausolea of the same date in Italy,—with these I profess to have no sympathy, and shall feel more than satisfied if by the present attempt I shall have assisted ever so humbly to undermine their baleful influence upon the works of the present day, and to prepare the way for what is more worthy of the Art and Architecture of the nineteenth century.



## LIST OF PLATES.

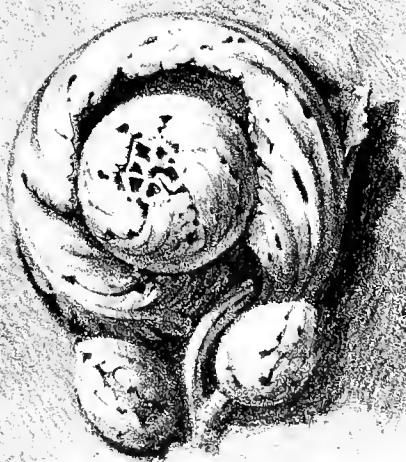
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### PLATE

- I. *Byzantine*, figs. 1 and 2 are ball flowers from foliage scroll on the architrave to central doorway in western façade of St. Mark's Cathedral, Venice. Fig. 3, capital from the external upper story on the south side of ditto.
- II. *Byzantine*, fig. 1, capital to column of screen dividing south aisle from nave of ditto. Figs. 2, 3, and 4, capitals from upper range of columns to vestibule, ditto.
- III. *Byzantine*, fig. 1, capital to disengaged column within vestibule, ditto. Fig. 2, capital to column in choir, wholly gilt, ditto. Fig. 3, capital to columns flanking central doorway, ditto.
- IV. *Byzantine*, figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, sundry capitals from the exterior, ditto.
- V. *Early German Gothic*, figs. 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7, from the Church at Bacharach, on the Rhine. Figs. 2, 3, and 8, from the Church of St. Gereon, Cologne. Figs. 9 and 10, angle base spurs from porch to Maestricht Cathedral. Fig. 11, moulding from west door to Church at Boppard, on the Rhine.
- VI. *Early French Gothic*, figs. 1 and 3 from Norrey Church, near Caen, Normandy. Fig. 2 from Lisieux Cathedral, ditto. Fig. 4, door-head to south aisle to choir of Church at Tour en Bessin, near Bayeux, ditto.
- VII. *Early French Gothic*, fig. 1, capital from Coutances Cathedral, ditto. Fig. 2, boss from Norrey Church, ditto. Fig. 3, capital from Bayeux Cathedral.  
*Flamboyant*, fig. 4, finial to sacristy door, Evreux Cathedral, ditto.

## PLATE

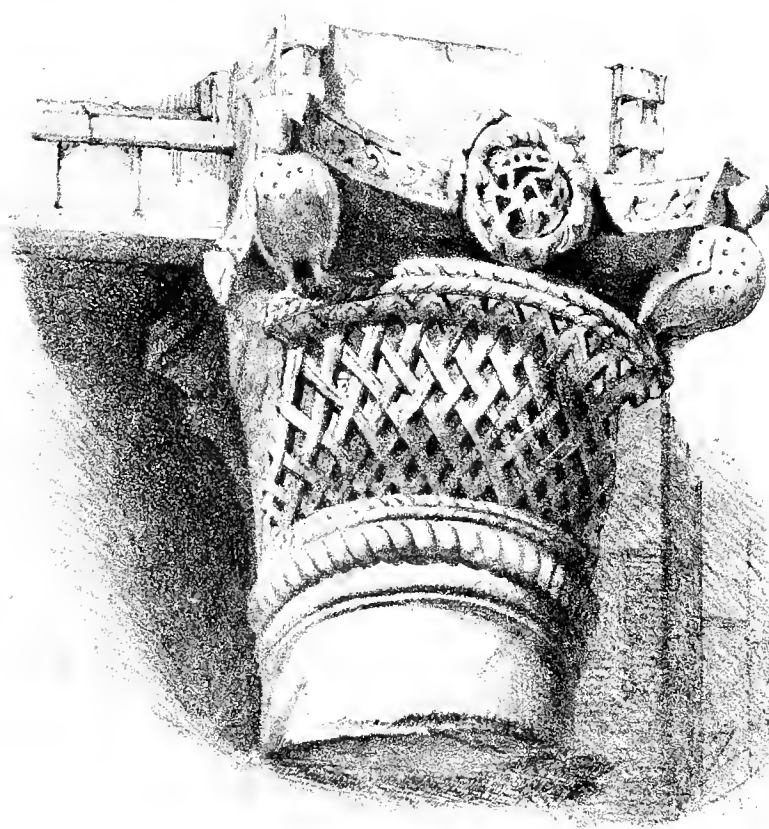
- VIII. *Complete French Gothic*, figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4, spandril ornaments from north transept of Rouen Cathedral.  
*Flamboyant*, fig. 5, lancet window-head from apse to Church of St. Sauveur, Caen.
- IX. *Flamboyant*, fig. 1, upper part of a curious external recess with staircase in wall, ditto, ditto.
- X. *Transition to Gothic from Byzantine*, fig. 1, internal cornice from Chapel attached to St. Mark's, Venice.  
*Transition to Gothic from Arabian*, fig. 2, external string course from Ca' Loredan, Grand Canal, ditto.  
*Venetian Gothic*, figs. 3, 4, and 5, fragments of foliage from capitals to lower columns Doge's Palace, ditto.
- XI. *Venetian Gothic*, third capital from the Porta della Carta, next the Piazzetta, Doge's Palace.
- XII. *Venetian Gothic*, figs. 1, 2, and 5, portions of foliage from capitals of upper range of columns, ditto. Fig. 3, capital from a Palace in Milan.



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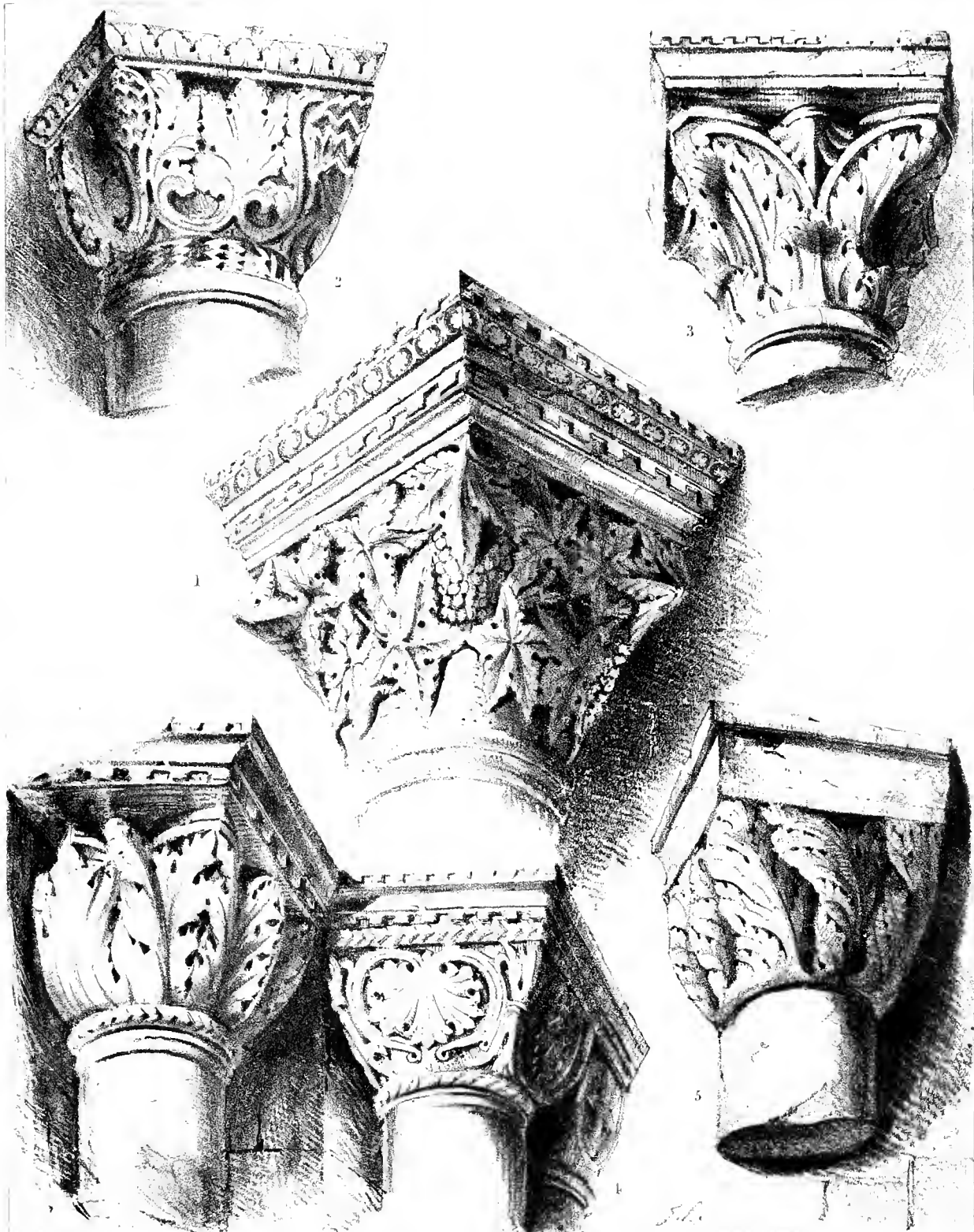


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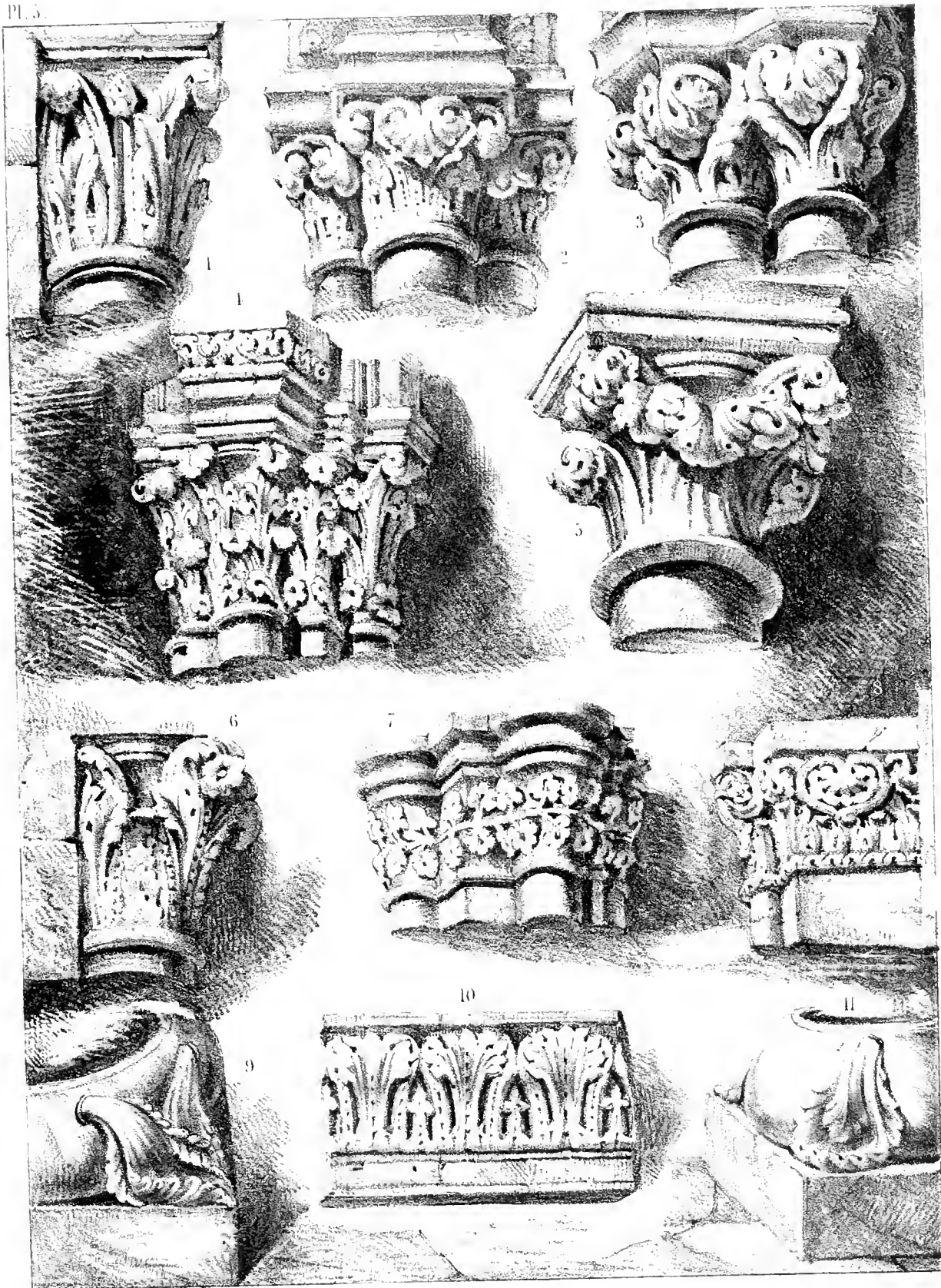




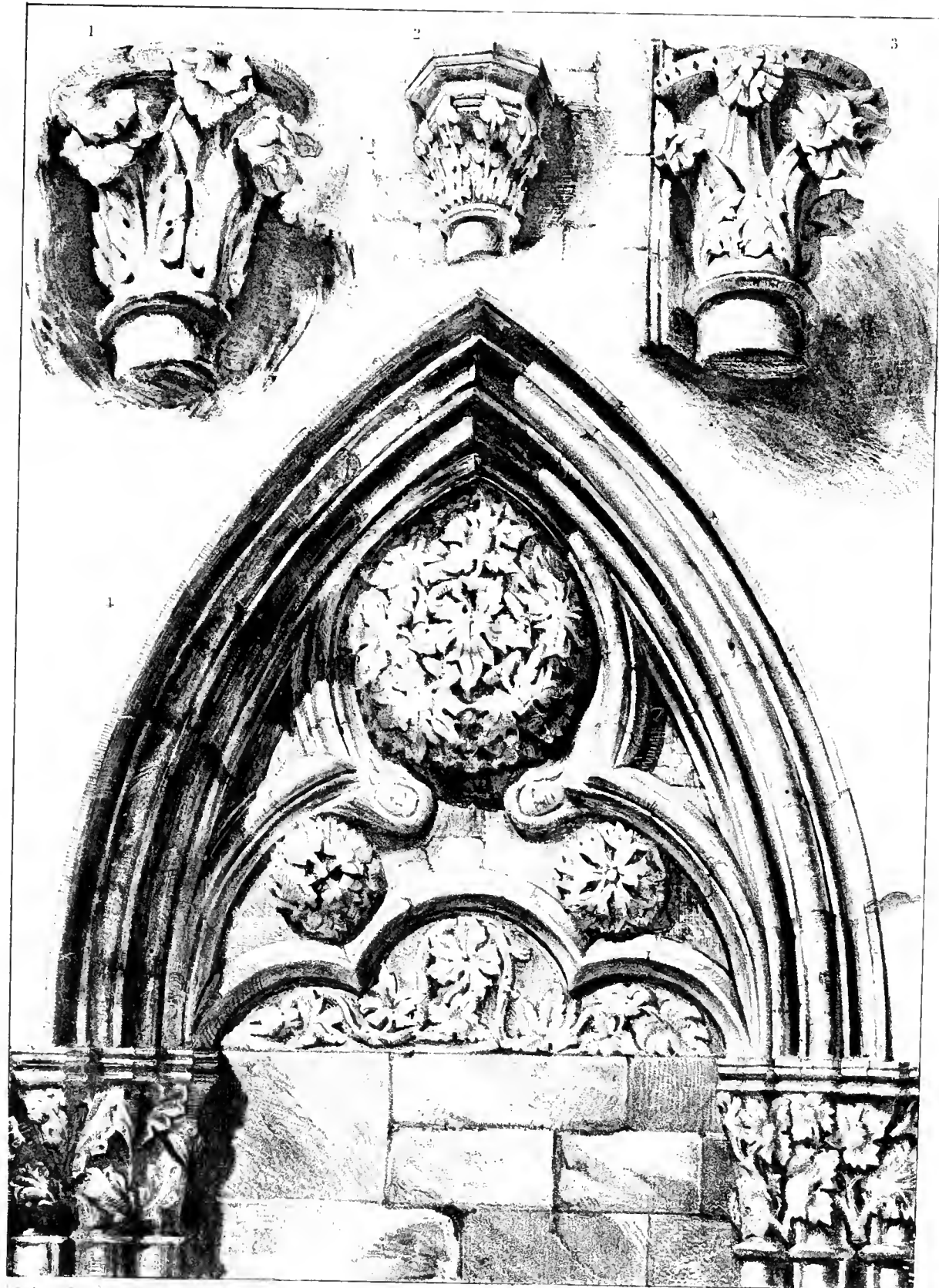




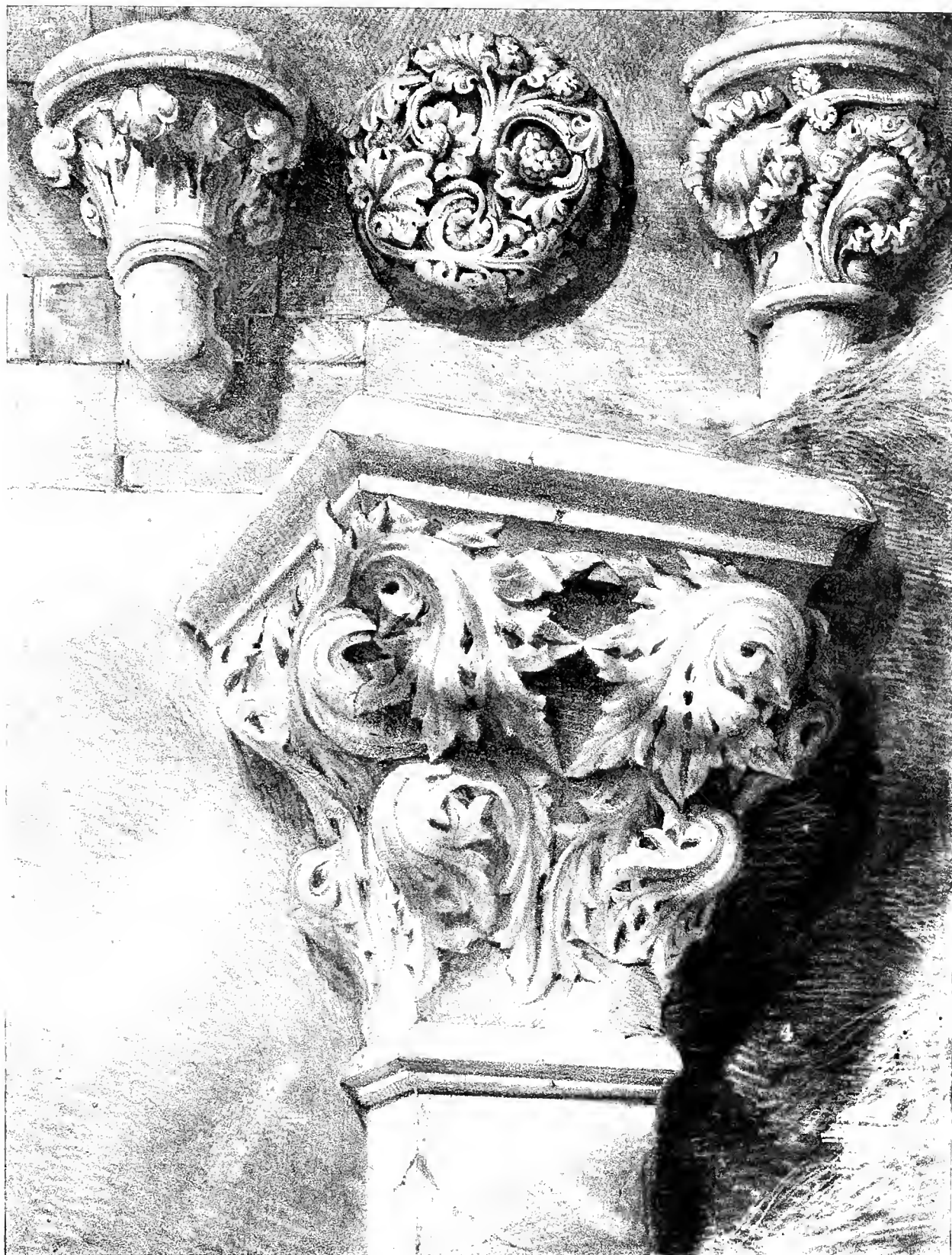






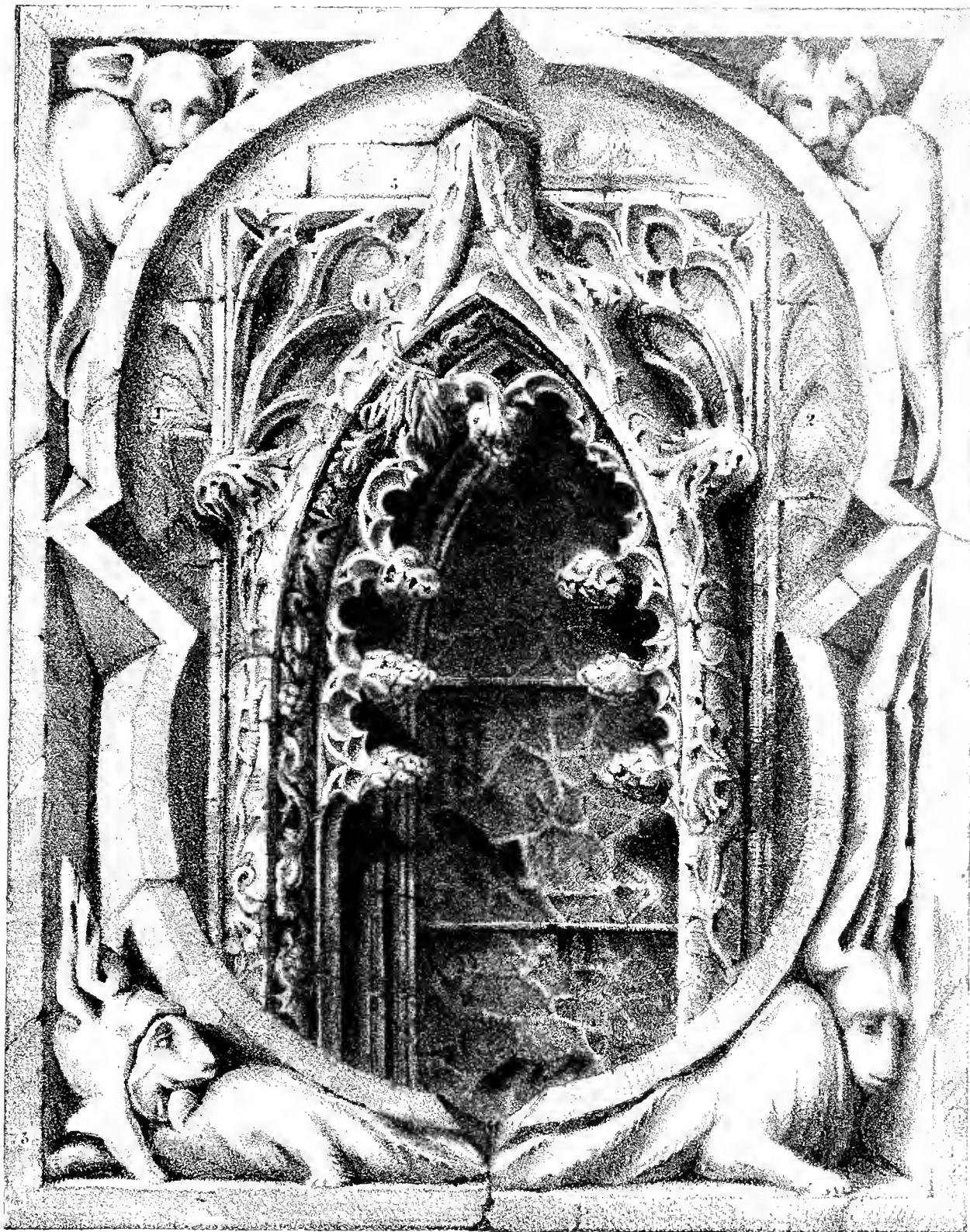






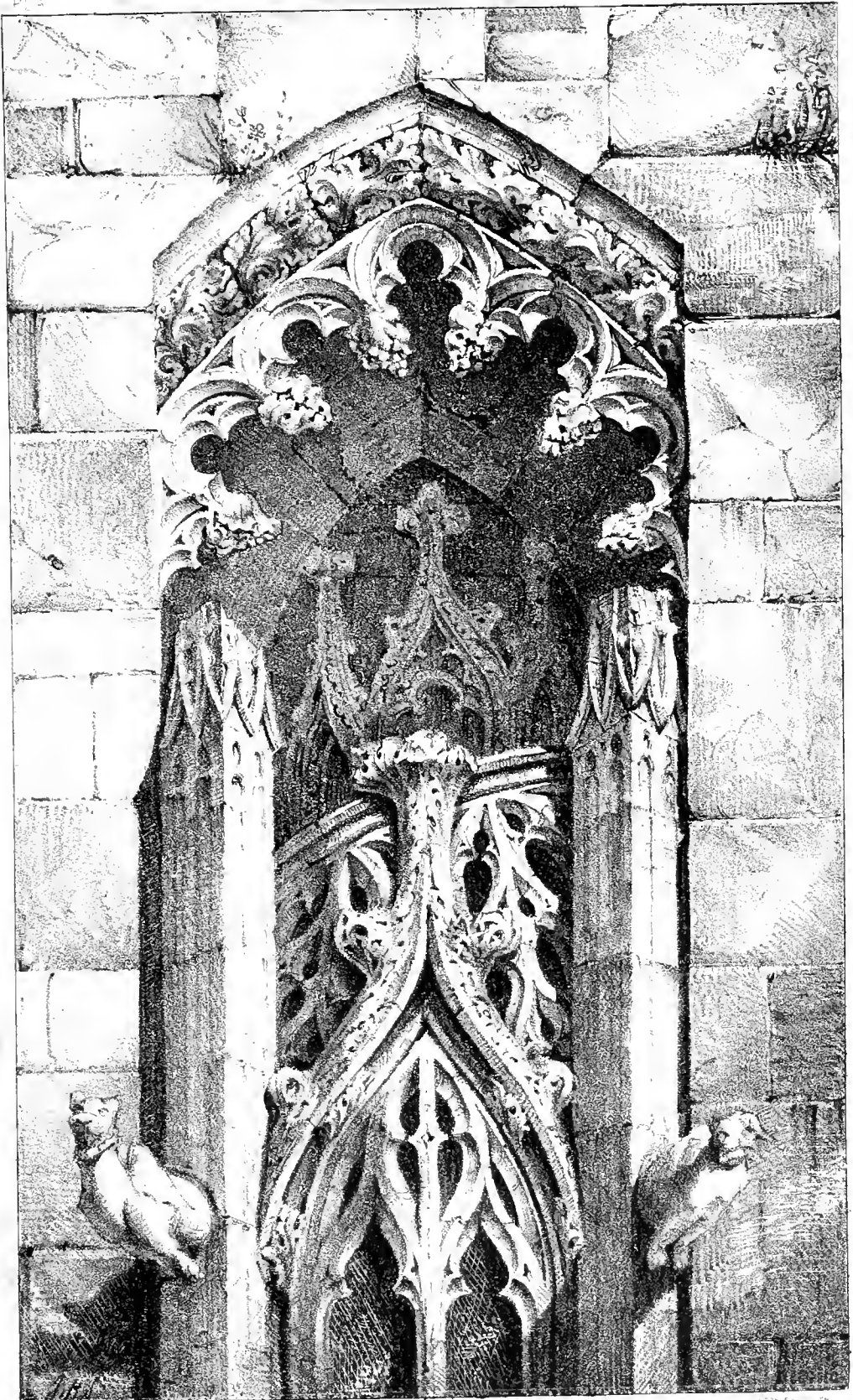














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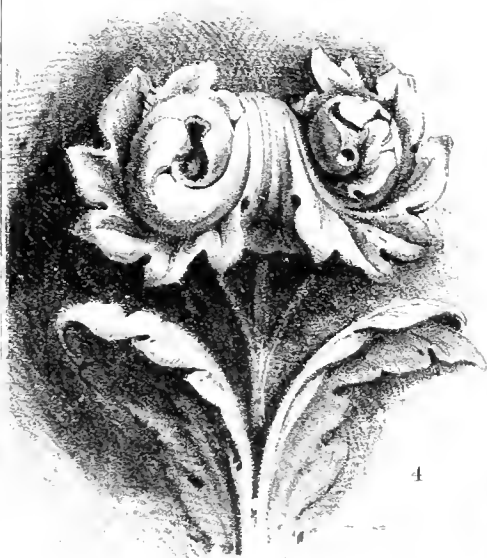
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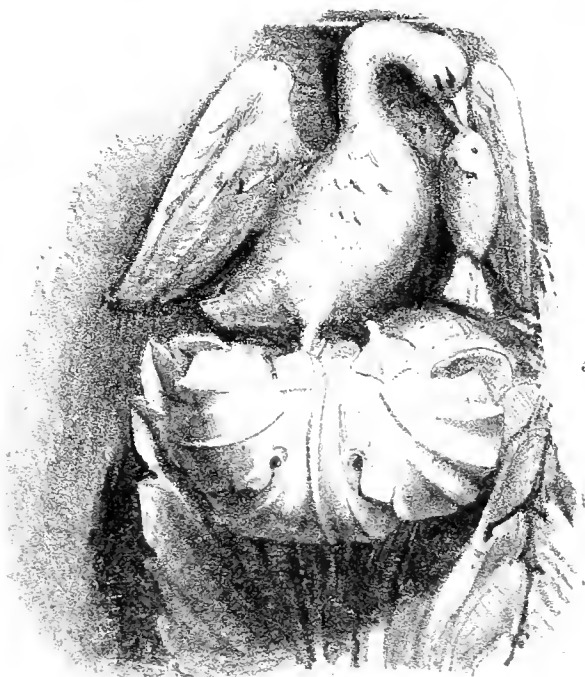
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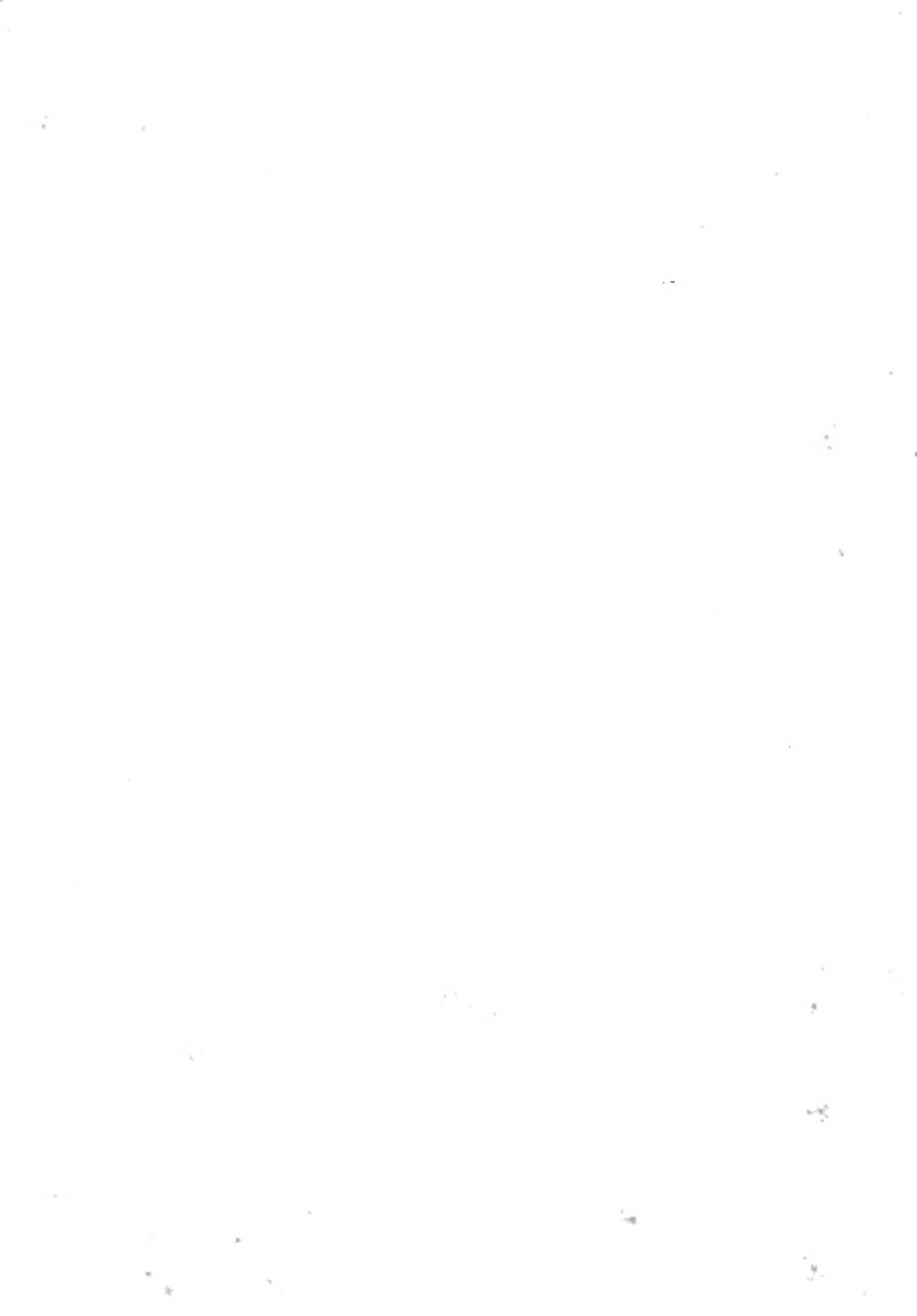


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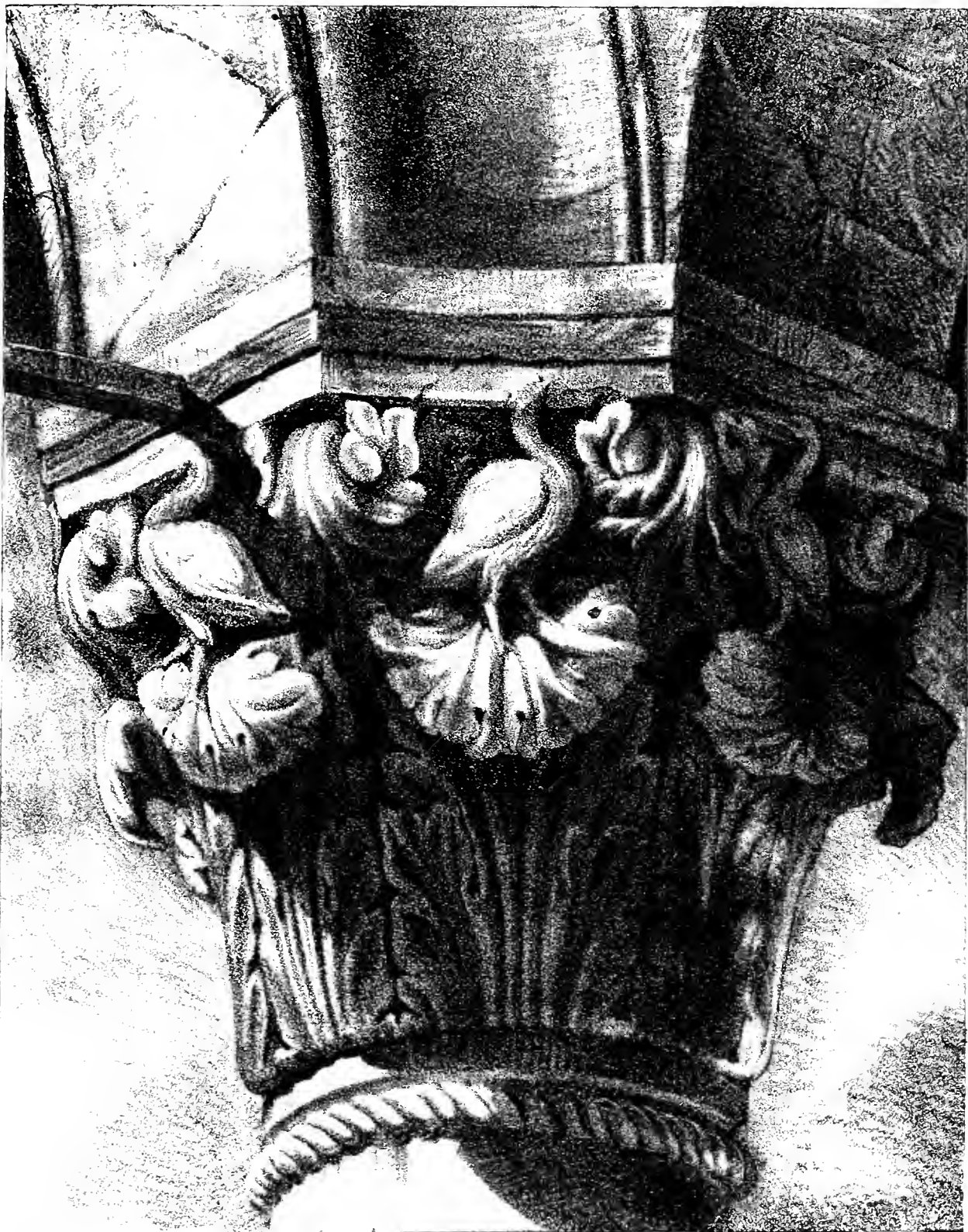




Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3

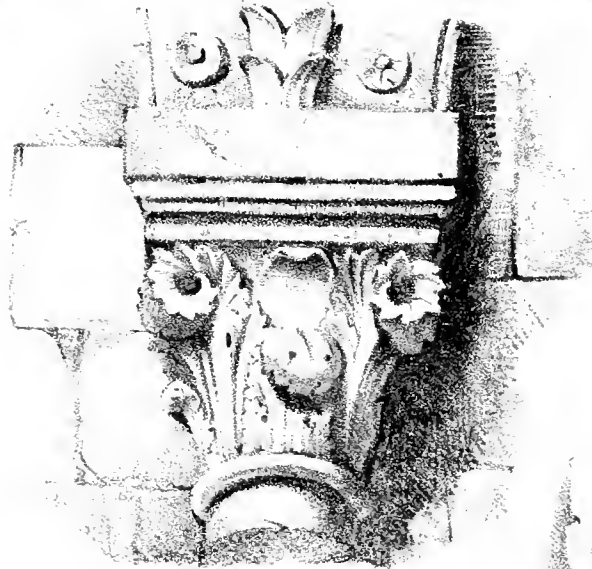


Fig 4



Fig 5







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